This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

Four Original Plays

A. W. DuBourg

23497.61

HARVARD COLLEGE
LIBRARY

THE BEQUEST OF

EVERT JANSEN WENDELL
(CLASS OF 1882)
OF NEW YORK

1918

FOUR ORIGINAL PLAYS.

I.

GREENCLOTH: A STORY OF MONTE CARLO.

II.

VITTORIA CONTARINI: A STORY OF VENICE

III.

LAND AND LOVE: A STORY OF ENGLISH LIFE.

IV.

ART AND LOVE: A SKETCH OF ARTIST LIFE.

FOUR ORIGINAL PLAYS

(UNACTED)

BY

A. W. DUBOURG

AUTHOR OF "FOUR STUDIES OF LOVE," ETC.
JOINT AUTHOR OF THE COMEDY, "NEW MEN AND OLD ACRES."

LONDON
RICHARD BENTLEY & SON, NEW BURLINGTON ST
Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty the Queen
1883

Acting rights, and all other rights reserved.

23497.61

HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY
FROM
THE BEQUEST OF
EVERT JANSEN WENDELL
1918

TO

C. S. D. AND I. R. D.

THESE

Plays are Dedicated.

" Ce n'est pas de Tocqueville, c'est de moi."

LE MONDE OU L'ON S'ENNUIE.

CONTENTS.

PAGE

GREENCLOTH 1

VITTORIA CONTARINI 75

LAND AND LOVE 147

ART AND LOVE 218

PREFACE.

THESE plays are *published*, partly because the author is tired of hearing that original English plays are never written nowadays, and partly because the popular taste for farcical comedy and burlesque tends to "crowd out" work of serious purpose, be it the intensity of drama or the satire of comedy. We children of this last quarter of the nineteenth century have discovered that life is a farce, and not a drama; or if in any sense a drama, a drama of brutal realism—the tragedy of the slums, and the tragedy of the police court.

Well, these plays, be they good or bad, are original English plays, and they have been written with a certain amount of serious purpose. Their main purpose is, of course, to interest and amuse—to interest, through an analysis of human nature and human motive, and through the conflict and clash of human passions; to amuse, through a satirical rendering of human vanity and human folly.

In their serious purpose they endeavour, in some sort, to touch the pulse of every-day social life; they are restricted, however, to certain phases of modern existence, and they do not attempt any solution in dramatic

form of the burning questions of the day. It is, perhaps, worth observing how much the English drama differs in this respect from the French drama. Nearly every great *modern day* French play deals more or less with a social problem, or strong social interests. The continuity of intellectual thought is not broken in France the moment a spectator enters one of the leading theatres. The social problem of the day is the theme of the modern drama played before him. The amusement of the evening affords a fresh contribution towards the solution of that problem, and the theatre becomes a valuable factor in French intellectual life. Our provision for continuity of thought is, for the most part, a much more simple affair in England—a snowstorm, perchance, in Seven Dials, or a *real* hansom cab and a *real* hot potato can on Waterloo Bridge. It is, of course, open to doubt whether the educated English mind finds as much interest in cotton-wool snowstorms and real potato cans, as the French mind finds in the present burning French questions of divorce, secular marriage, and clerical influence. In addition to this, the French dramatic critic is forced to consider the drama he reviews from a higher standpoint than his *confrère* in England. The creation of the author must be weighed in France, not in the mere scale of theatrical utility, or with regard to the value of a given part to the individual actor, but in its relation to literary standards, and in its relation to the real *outside* world of life and thought. Criticism of this nature ceases to be the mere anatomical dissection of a play, and it carries both play and reader into higher regions of thought and speculation. And so it falls under such a system, that author, actor, and critic, all

have their work in elevating the drama until it becomes a social power of recognized force and influence. Consider the interest of a *première* at the Français—an important *social* event, commanding the whole attention of Paris, and commanding, moreover, the presence of the highest persons in the State, and the highest persons in the ranks of politics, literature, art, science, and fashion.

The themes of the present plays are, for the most part, themes of hope and redemption—out of decadence, restoration; out of degradation, hope. Somewhat Quixotic, perhaps, to eyes coloured by the social cynicism of these latter days; but, nevertheless, that old common-place English love of fiction "ending well" may represent, for aught we know, a latent faith in the better possibilities of human nature. And we may well hope that many a long day will pass before that fiction of brutality which revels in the gradual degradation of a Gervaise (that character of light amid thick darkness, till the horrible darkness puts out the light) will become palatable to English men and women.

The play of "Greencloth" is essentially the study of a woman's character—a character on the surface, with nothing fit for admiration. Insatiable personal vanity, with a fair face and figure—ready accomplices for such vanity; an intense love of all the frivolities of fashionable life—perpetual thirst for its amusements and excitements, unquenchable as the dram-drinker's thirst. A married woman, withal, but with a heart untouched by love; estranged from her husband—his fault, perhaps, as much as hers; but, at any rate, no saving love to help her, and only a sense of contempt and pique towards

this husband; and then lovers buzzing round her beauty eagerly—lovers very ardent in their own selfishness.

What safeguards? Two, vanity and cynicism—strange guardian angels, in very sooth, and yet they had been true guardians of her honour.

First, vanity—the vanity of personal display, but costly and beautiful dresses must have a fitting arena for their exhibition—once banished from the social pale, and those opportunities for exciting social admiration and envy (that zest of dress) would be lost—as well dress splendidly on a deserted island. And, finally, cynicism; the contempt for her husband was her contempt for men at large; he, too, had uttered flattering words, had said soft, sweet things, and her husband was a man. Well, many lovers of the London season and the country house had uttered flattering words, and said soft, sweet things, and they too were men, as was her husband; and the men who had chiefly spoken to her were greatly skilled in the utterance of flattering words, and in the saying of soft, sweet things. Was it worth while losing the world for the sake of any one man? a brief spell of passion, and long days of weariness; she shuddered when she remembered those days. Was it worth while making two experiments in the hollowness of love, the second experiment involving social perdition? So vanity and worldly wisdom had joined in the work of her safety, and she stood before the world with smiles and radiance on her fair face, but underneath, satiety was gnawing at her heart with fierce cravings for more and more social excitement, that husky food, wherewith to fill up the aching void.

Whence the redemption, and whence the hope?

Defiance and smiles before the world, and yet one touch of an old familiar hand, a few loving words from old voices, and cynicism and vanity break down, and the heart avows its bitterness and its misery. This is hope; redemption is another matter; but redemption does come in a fierce struggle, a big tug with fate, a wrestling with evil, the tension of the python wound round a woman's form. And redemption comes, moreover, in strange guise. Upon her weak shoulders, trained only to lightest burdens of frivolity, is cast the heavy burden of saving a husband from destruction. She who had been hitherto the recipient of censure and admonition has in her turn to become the monitor. Her battle is needs fought against tremendous odds, because all love and all wifely influence had been long lost between her husband and herself, and she has to fight the battle with those very entanglements and allurements of doubtful propriety, with which she had so long trifled, and from which she had only saved herself through the dictates of worldly prudence. Two-edged weapons, indeed, and very dangerous to handle, but forced into her hands as her only weapons in the desperate conflict. Truly a bitter irony of retribution, compelled to play the coquette, forced to smile and cajole with a sickened heart. But she conquers in the end; and in the very fierceness of the struggle—through searching agony of soul—does she redeem her own character, as well as the character of the man she saves from perdition. So out of the very dregs of the cup of pleasure is pressed a healing draught.

The story of "Vittoria Contarini" has been told before,* but this play, which is *republished* in the present

* "Four Studies of Love."

series, is the source of the story. It may be fairly called a *romantic* play, because it is the story of the conversion of a confirmed *roué* and a sensualist into a noble and chivalrous lover. There is clearly a good deal of romance in such a theme. Do such latent possibilities ride in Rotten Row, or pace "the sweet shady side of Pall Mall"? Have women really souls as well as bodies in their pleasant cultus of materialism? Well, if fiction supplies us with ideals of debasement, let it at least supply us with ideals of "latent possibility." Romance requires a liberal hand, so all the splendid wealth of a great woman's nature has been given to the heroine—devoted enthusiasm in a great patriotic cause, the cause of Venetian freedom, undaunted courage, and a nobleness incapable of counting the cost and pain of generous and devoted action. These gifts are all necessary for the battle she has to fight, nor could they be abated by jot or tittle, for her battle of woman's honour is fought against a man in whose theory of life woman has no honour, and scarcely a soul. She conquers through the very force of her nobleness and devotion; but it is a fierce battle, and in the hour of her triumph she falls helpless in that man's arms. An absolute triumph, though a strange one, for in the course of about two hours, more or less, first one person and then another had come to believe in her shame, until throughout the whole city of Venice there remained only one being who believed in her virtue, and purity, and nobleness—the man who, at the commencement of those very two hours, had striven to accomplish her degradation—the man whose life she had redeemed, raising it from its low estate of all-absorbing selfishness.

"Vittoria Contarini" *is* a romantic play. Impossible, some may think, still there is a certain amount of interest to be found in the evolution of impossible ideals.

"Land and Love," like "New Men and Old Acres," is a play of English life—English country life—glowing September with its smell of the turnips, and the misty, dewy dawn on Wiltshire Downs, with the young hounds and the cubs, and the coverts still full of green leaves, with touches of gold here and there in brake and fern. Old English "country squire" feudality with opulent democracy growling at its heels—an opulence in envious conflict with the class distinctions of English life. The girls are fresh, pure-natured, wholesome English girls, without one touch of the sickly innocence of the French *ingénue*—rejoicing in country life and country pleasures, and in honest, straightforward English love; and free use has been made of the *causerie intime* of two such girls—foolish talk in a sense, but yet closely allied to wisdom. Nor is the play without a strong theme of romantic interest (perhaps romance breathes more easily in fresh country air): a lover and a soldier, who is prepared to sacrifice all that a man holds most precious (even his own reputation before the world, and that is no bubble to an honest man) for the sake of the girl he loves, and the girl he loves is well worthy of the sacrifice. Two girls, indeed, and two men —honest, true-hearted English folk—round whose lives an adverse fate weaves its tangled web; but the play is a comedy, and steadfast devotion tears the web to pieces, and wipes away the sorrow, and the right people are married in the end, as they ought to be married here

in England, and as they ought to be married in a comedy which strives to be a picture of English life.

"Art and Love" is merely a sketch of artist life—an episode in the life of an actress. Great gifts and great aspirations, and a life of eager activity, all merged in a life of affluent inactivity. The artist buried away in the wife. Milk and honey, and plenty of it, as food for the soul; and yet, withal, a heart full of love, and a conscience full of duty.

With the exception of "Art and Love," on the amateur stage—admirably played by Lady Monckton and Mr. Palgrave Simpson—these plays have never been acted; so the author submits his work to the public without "scenery, dresses, and decorations." Sometimes, authors have rather too much of such aids, and authorship is apt to be lost in carpentry and dress-making; but it must be emphatically urged that a play is always an incomplete work until it has been acted. "Between the lines" lie those mysterious spaces which must be filled by flesh and blood—by the embodiment of the actor. In the mind's eye, indeed, we may see the play of the passions and the workings of emotion; but we see, at best, "through a glass darkly." The dramatic author may know well what he *means* to do; but he can never know, nor can his readers know, what he has really *done*, until the manifold inflections of the human voice have revealed the full force and meaning of his words, and flesh and blood have stood forth in visible embodiment of his creation.

33, GLOUCESTER STREET, S.W., *January*, 1883.

GREENCLOTH:

A STORY OF MONTE CARLO.

IN FOUR ACTS.

"We have trod the wine-vat's treasure,
Whence, ripe to steam and stain,
Foams round the feet of pleasure
The blood-red must of pain."

CHARACTERS.

HARRY VERNEY.
CAPTAIN MORLEY.
THE CHEVALIER VAUBAN.
EDWARD ALSTON (of the firm of Gregory, Alston, & Co., Brass Founders and Mediæval Metal Workers, Birmingham).
M. SASS, Director of the Établissement at Monte Carlo.
THOMAS, an English Waiter.
SERGENT-DE-VILLE.

MRS. VERNEY.
MADAME ST. PREUX.
MADAME FRAGER (*née* Jones).
MISS LINDSAY, of Balham.
MISS DOROTHY LINDSAY, her Niece.

Period, the present day. The scene is laid at Monte Carlo. An interval of a week between the 1st and 2nd Acts. Acts II., III., and IV. occupy a period of about twelve hours.

ACT I.

Gardens and café at Monte Carlo, landscape background, with distant view of the sea, of Rocca Bruna, and the mountains of the coast-line.

SASS, *at a small table, with coffee, smoking cigarette, and reading over the hotel list of visitors.* THOMAS *standing at his side.* MADAME ST. PREUX *and* MADAME FRAGER *seated at a further table.*

Sass. Très bien, Monsieur Thomas, bien arrangé; Messieurs les Russes, Messieurs les Allemands, Messieurs les Wallaques, Messieurs les Turcs, très bien logé. Eh bien! how ave you lodged your compatriots? Let me to see: Mr. and Mistress Verney, London, *au quatrième! Mon Dieu,* Monsieur Thomas, dat beautiful Mistress Verney at ze top of ze house! I ave watch her yesterday at ze *table d'hôte;* beauty is von dinner for me, *elle est belle.* You are von leetle ass, Thomas.

Thomas. Mr. Verney would not pay for better rooms. Madame grumbled, but Monsieur was obstinate. They are only here for a day or so.

Sass. You are von big fool, Thomas. Mistress Verney is so beautiful, dey will come to look at Mistress Verney, dey will *stay* to look at Mistress Verney, dey will *play,* Thomas, ze *établissement* will gain. *Attendez,* dat Russian Count—let me tink, he ave money yesterday, he ave no money to-day; his rooms are free, he ave his *congé.*

Thomas. Our best rooms! But Mr. Verney won't pay the price.

Sass. All de rooms are von price. You shall say so. *Changez* ze tariff cards, everyting dat Madame likes,

vases of flowers, everyting zat is beautiful, *vous comprenez*, Thomas, everyting, *vite donc*! Look alive! (*Looking at list.*) *Ah, comment?* Mees Lindsay, Mees Dorothy Lindsay, Balham—vot is Balham? Mees Lindsay, is she beautiful? Do dey tell of her in your society journal?

Thomas. Certainly not. Old, dowdy, a frump.

Sass. Frump! At ze top of ze house, *bien;* let her remain.

Thomas. She gave me this tomfoolery last night (*shows tract*).

Sass. Tomfoolery! *qu'est-ce que c'est que ça?* Make me to see.

Thomas. This tract (*gives tract*).

Sass. Tract! *C'est bien.* Quick, Thomas, Mistress Verney, everyting. (*Looking at tract*) *Comment,* tract? (*Exit Thomas.*) (*Reads title.*) "Leetle Buttons, or, You'd better not bet." *C'est curieux. Ah, ces Anglais!* (*Enter Captain Morley and the Chevalier Vauban*) *Bon jour, Messieurs.* (*To Morley*) Tell me, who was Leetle Buttons? What for he not bet?

Morley. Little Buttons! what do you mean? (*Sass hands tract to Morley.*) A tract! What, the deuce, a tract at Monte Carlo? Fish out of water. A religious publication.

Sass. Vraiment, vot you call an English *religion,* a *culte. Je comprends,* we ave no English *religion* here; *c'est malheureux.* I shall regard Mees Lindsay.

Morley. How's the list filling for the pigeon tournament?

Sass. Only vonts von name.

Morley. By Jove, I have it, put down Mrs. Verney's name.

Sass. Bien, ze beautiful Mistress Verney; *très bien!* Her champion?

Morley. Her husband.

Sass. Comment, her husband?

Morley. English husbands and wives.

Sass. Always husbands and wives in England; but if she shall not stay at Monte Carlo?

Morley. I want her to stay.

Sass (*aside*). *Et moi aussi.* (*Aloud.*) I mean her to stay.

Morley. Where's the prize bracelet?

Sass. I fetch him *exprès.*

Morley. The sheen of the diamonds will keep her.

Sass. Like to like; ze eyes of woman, ze diamonds of earth. Tell me, has Monsieur, the husband, any money?

Morley. Not a rap!

Sass. C est dommage! Mais Madame is beautiful. Mees Lindsay, a *religion.* Ah, *ces Anglais!* "Leetle Buttons," vot for he not bet? (*Exit.*)

Vauban. So, let's to business.

Morley. Madame St. Preux, I declare, and her English aunt.

Vauban. Her Argus in spectacles, with nothing to guard.

Morley. Madame's reputation.

Vauban. Easy work for Argus.

Morley. For shame. I must make peace this morning.

Vauban. For your neglect last evening, that Madame Verney—but just run your eye over this account, it won't take a minute (*gives account book to Morley*). You say this Verney has thirty thousand pounds?

Morley. He had a fortune from his uncle of forty, ten have gone in the extravagances of London life; his wife—

Vauban. He travels to make his economies with his wife. He has come to an expensive place.

Morley. Her dress?

Vauban. His play!

Morley. Verney never plays.

Vauban. Mon ami, a man never has Roman fever till he goes to Rome. Play is the malaria of these coasts. One never knows a man's capacity for disease, until disease has tried him. Thirty thousand pounds! You shall propose Verney for the Marina Club, I will secure his election. It is a pity thirty thousand pounds should be lost at the public tables.

Morley. Verney is a fool; but after ruin what remains?

Vauban. What remains, *comment donc?* Madame Verney remains.

Morley. No, by heavens!

Vauban. Don't be alarmed by ultimate conclusions. I can look into the abyss. It does not make me tremble.

Morley. Egad! once an English gentleman.

Vauban. Once I burnt some I.O.U.'s, and saved an English gentleman from dishonour.

Morley. Dishonour! Death could have saved me. You kept me alive to do your hideous work. The generosity of a fiend.

Vauban. I wanted a decoy. I wanted a gentleman of social position, *c'est vrai!* Before you became my partner, you possessed every vice that was compatible with the honour of a gentleman. Pardon me, I do not think you have fallen very far, your vices remain intact, they are very comprehensive.

Morley. Curse your cynicism. I will not ruin this man, Verney.

Vauban. I *will*—that's my business; Madame Ver-

ney, yours! Come, finish those accounts. (*Morley examines book; Vanlem smokes.*) A nice round sum for your share.

Frager (*to St. Preux*). My angel, why so silent? Since my return from my devotions—prayers for you—you have not spoken.

St. Preux. I'm busy.

Frager. Thinking?

St. Preux. Hating! I must send to Paris—

Frager. Another dress?

St. Preux. Encore une toilette! I hate dress. We French women, we must dress; these English women, they can't dress; and yet, and yet—

Frager. They waste their money on French dressmakers.

St. Preux. Fools! they can defy every law of taste—muddle colours till one shivers—and remain beautiful in the end. They beat us in the midst of their own defeat.

Frager. But they paint so badly, my poor countrywomen.

St. Preux. Paint for sickly faces! But they breathe fresh air, they ride, they walk, they play at healthy games; beef and mutton in their childhood, not sickly veal; girls, not stove-plants; women, not painted masks. Necessity is our teacher, not theirs. No wonder they can't paint. That woman last night, that Madame Verney—

Frager. So English, my angel; so insular, my pet.

St. Preux. I hate her! She crushed me when she entered the room. Every eye went to her.

Frager. Her name, her society reputation!

St. Preux. They didn't know her name, but they *asked* her name. Her English face had won the day

before they knew her name. Be it so, let them worship her; but Captain Morley—

Frager. She can't marry Captain Morley, my little mouse.

St. Preux. She can hinder me. I dream of an English home, Aunt Jones; that deep lull of respectability, after—

Frager. Hush, my soft squirrel!

St. Preux. An English husband, faithful like a dog; what happiness, after—

Frager. Hush, my playful kitten!

St. Preux. If she stand between me and Captain Morley, *Je l'écraserai; garde à vous*, Madame Verney.

Frager. It is time to eat, my Persian cat—*déjeûner.*

St. Preux. Vous avez raison. If I could only eat, it would calm my mind. Oh you English women, you can always eat.

Vauban (*approaching Mesdames St. Preux and Frager*). *Bon jour, Mesdames. Il fait beau temps, n'est ce pas? Et bien*, Madame Frager. What do you think of *la belle* Verney?

Frager. Nothing much. People must be mad.

Vauban. They are mad—Morley yonder, quite mad.

St. Preux. Captain Morley!

Vauban. Didn't you observe it last night? *Mon Dieu*, it would be a triumph for Morley. They say she leaves to-day.

St. Preux. Vraiment! (*Aside*). *Je suis très contente.*

Vauban. We shall lose Morley; he's sure to follow in her train. Mad, I tell you. No more of Morley at Monte Carlo. *Dites donc*, Madame St. Preux. *Monsieur* Verney, you were introduced to him last night; persuade him to remain here for a few days.

St. Preux. Is he rich, that you want him to stay?

Vauban. Oh no! but I don't want to lose Morley, that's all. (*Morley approaches the group.*)

St. Preux. Ah, Captain Morley, we are talking of your beautiful English friend. I found her so delightful last evening, such bright, distinguished manners. I love Englishwomen; they are so good, so respectable. My good aunt here is an Englishwoman; we shall be such true friends, I'm sure we shall.

Morley. I'm sure you will.

Vauban (*aside*). *Dissimulation superbe—une grande artiste!*

(*Mrs. Verney enters.*)

St. Preux (*turning*). *Ah, la voilà, la belle Anglaise! Bon jour, Madame.*

Mrs. Verney (*to St. Preux*). Good-morning, Madame. (*Bows to the others.*) I'm so glad I've found you; for I'm afraid it is little more than good-bye; we are positively going to-day. Isn't it a shame?

St. Preux. A shame? Absurd!

Mrs. Verney. Of course it's absurd. This lovely, heavenly place; only arrived last evening—fancy that! Only one little sip of delight, and leaving to-day. The very air seems literally made of champagne. I could sit here for hours, and look at that lovely coast-line. Rocca Bruna, isn't it, perched up among the mountains? And all this world of gaiety round one's feet.

St. Preux. But why does Monsieur Verney want to go?

Mrs. Verney. Some quiet place—Bordighera. I hate a quiet place. I can't bear to live in a quiet place by myself.

St. Preux. Your husband!

Mrs. Verney. My husband—merciful Heaven!—and a little villa; a little villa and my husband, from morning to night. It's too awful to contemplate. Do try to find out something to keep Mr. Verney here.

Morley. This is a dangerous place, remember—play.

Mrs. Verney. He never plays. If he would only play—just a little, I mean.

Morley. A little play is very dangerous.

Mrs. Verney. Is it? How nice!

Morley. You don't know how dangerous. Go; it's safer to go, mind—to leave this place; that's my advice.

Vauban. What a speech for a gallant man!

St. Preux (*aside*). He wants her to go, that he may follow.

Mrs. Verney. You are positively more dreadful than my husband. (*To Vauban*) Is a little play so very dangerous?

Vauban. To say so is to make people gamblers. Talk of danger, and people are fascinated. Here's an infallible maxim which will hold you safe and sound. Resolve never to lose more than a certain sum on a given day. Play should be no more than buying a dress or a trinket; you should always buy out of your ordinary expenditure.

Mrs. Verney. Just so.

Vauban. Did you see the play-rooms last night?

Mrs. Verney. My husband wouldn't go; but I must see them before I leave. I *will* see them. Captain Morley, I want you to take me?

Morley. Perhaps.

Mrs. Verney. What's the harm? I'm going away directly.

St. Preux. No harm certainly.

Mrs. Verney. I can see no harm. How can I play, even if I wanted to play. I haven't a single franc in my purse.

Vauban. I can see no harm—without money one can't play, without money one can't lose.

Mrs. Verney. That's clear enough. Come, Captain

Morley, I am sure you will be a very prudent guardian angel. (*To St. Preux*) But you are coming with us?

Frager (*to St. Preux*). My child, I am dying of hunger, after my devotions—*déjeûner*, I implore.

St. Preux. An English appetite. I yield to the inexorable. (*To Mrs. Verney*) *Au revoir, chère Madame.*

Mrs. Verney. Au revoir. I hope it may be *au revoir;* if not, good-bye. My husband is in the *salle à manger.* Try to persuade him to stay.

St. Preux. Have I your permission?

Mrs. Verney. My full permission.

St. Preux. Then it shall be *au revoir—parole d'honneur.*

St. Preux (*to Frager, turning to go*). He loves her, *ma tante.*

Frager (*to St. Preux*). After breakfast, my sweet angel.

St. Preux (*aside*). *Garde à vous, Madame Verney!* (*Exeunt St. Preux and Frager.*)

Mrs. Verney (*to Morley and Vauban*). No time to lose; recollect there's a train waiting to carry me off from this enchanted land.

Vauban. I'll lead the way—you shall follow, Morley—with Madame Verney.

(*Voice of Verney outside*) Mrs. Verney! here, Geraldine!

Mrs. Verney. My husband! an explosion! You had better leave me; I'll join you afterwards, if I survive—I probably shall. Wait for me at the Kiosque. (*Morley and Vauban go out.*) He has often spoken—this time, I shall speak. (*Verney enters.*)

Verney. I've been looking everywhere for you. Confound it; rushing all over the gardens. You knew it was breakfast time.

Mrs. Verney. I don't want any. I want to enjoy this delicious place.

Verney. To whom have you been talking?

Mrs. Verney. That Madame St. Preux and her aunt —the people we were introduced to last night; and Captain Morley and the Chevalier Vauban.

Verney. Where are they?

Mrs. Verney. The two ladies have gone in to breakfast.

Verney. And the two men?

Mrs. Verney. I've just sent them away.

Verney. Why?

Mrs. Verney. Because I was ashamed that they should see you. We can quarrel by ourselves. It's bad enough without having spectators. Now say what you have to say, because I want to go.

Verney. Where?

Mrs. Verney. To the gambling-rooms!

Verney. What did I tell you?

Mrs. Verney. That I was not to go; but I *am* going.

Verney. Curse the day I married you.

Mrs. Verney. Curses go home to roost, Harry.

Verney. The daughter of a country squire, mortgaged up to the hilt. Not even money enough to hire a furnished house for six weeks in the London season. A girl without a rap to bless herself with, and now not a single thought in her head but vanity and extravagance.

Mrs. Verney. The old story—*your* old story. I've heard it fifty times. Shall I tell you *my* story—for the *first* time?

Verney. Gad! I know it. The story of a shallow head, and a frivolous heart.

Mrs. Verney. It shall be plain speaking, then—once for all. You were a younger son. You held no particular social position, neither did you possess any

special gifts of social attraction; but you had ambition —*of a kind.* An easy, lazy ambition to haunt the best houses of London society, *somehow*—don't be irritable, this is the first time I have bored you with my story. There was nothing better to do. I grew to like it—to reign somewhere—even in the world of fashion – tinsel, but a crown—and you followed me. I took you where you would never have gone but for me. I drank in the thick incense of admiration—listened to words of flattery, and laughed—and do laugh every day. Oh, delicious vanity of men—jealousy, Harry? Pray spare yourself that inconvenience. Hearts, or what they call hearts, at my feet. No; not a shallow head. You were wrong there, indeed you were. What! leave that bright world, where I shine as a queen, by virtue of being your wife? Banish myself from the world of society and all its brightness; and, as a beggarly recompense, that bribe which a man calls "love." The eternity of a week. At least I'm not an utter fool. Go and eat your breakfast; the omelet will be spoilt. You'll find that Madame St. Preux at the *table d'hôte.* Talk to her; it will be a French lesson for you. (*Raising her voice.*) Ah, Captain Morley.

(*Morley and Vauban enter and come forward.*)

Mrs. Verney (*to Morley*). The thunder has cleared the air.

Morley (*aside*). It looks as if a bolt had fallen. (*Aloud*) How are you, Verney? They say it's your first visit here. I've put your name down for the pigeon-tournament—champion for your wife. If you win, a diamond bracelet for her.

Mrs. Verney. Delicious! a diamond bracelet from one's husband. What an original idea.

Verney (*sullenly*). We leave to-day. I've told you so.

Mrs. Verney. Then I haven't a moment to lose. (*To Morley*) Harry is going to breakfast. I am going to the rooms. Harry is quite agreeable.

Verney (*with irritation*). Go!

Mrs. Verney (*to Morley*). I was sure Harry would be charmed for me to have your escort.

(*Exeunt Mrs. Verney and Morley.*)

Verney (*aside*). (*Vauban watching him.*) Bitter words—yes, Henry Verney—bitter words. She had you at her mercy with those home thrusts. A fair face and a glib tongue, and the world at her feet; and you, at home with scarcely the grace of a contemptuous smile. Her visitors, not yours—tolerated abroad for the sake of that face and those smiles. Gad! it's maddening. If my homage could have sufficed for her—if my life had been worthy of her admiration; but it isn't! Anything is better than this state of existence. Something, anything—I don't care what, to break the thread of this cursed life.

Vauban (*watching Morley*) (*aside*). Ah! Monsieur Verney, I am waiting—you little know why I wait. The gossamer threads float round you—round *Madame*; so light, you cannot feel their touch; but they will bind with the force of steel when I turn the screw. (*Aloud.*) Ah! Monsieur Verney, so you go to-day—leave us. I am sorry. Ah, you go to breakfast; I go also. I will, with your permission, walk with you. We have heard of your victories at Hurlingham; we should like to see you shoot against Morley. Ah, Morley is too sure of victory; we want a real contest. Let us walk. I also am hungry. The prize is worth winning—real money value, if you like: other rich prizes. A skilful hand may absolutely live at Monte Carlo on *pigeons—vraiment!* Monsieur Verney, on *pigeons*. (*Exeunt Verney and Vauban.*)

(*Enter, by path, Dorothy Lindsay and Edward Alston.*)

Alston. What's the matter, Dorothy, dear.

Dorothy. I don't know. Don't keep bothering.

Alston. What have I done, dearest?

Dorothy. Nothing!

Alston. Well, then, what is it?

Dorothy. I tell you, I don't know. I wish you were more like other young men. Your dress makes you look so very good; other young men don't look so utterly good. It is so very dull being always quite good —it must be so pleasant to be just a little wicked.

Alston. Dorothy!

Dorothy. I don't mean very wicked; but just wicked enough to enjoy nice things. I suppose we shall always be very good when we are married?

Alston. I hope so, dearest.

Dorothy. Were you always such a very good boy—so provokingly good, from your cradle?

Alston. I tried to be good when I fell in love with you.

Dorothy. Aunt said you were no better than a worldling. I thought when I accepted you, that perhaps some day you would want to be a little wicked—a very little *wee* bit wicked, I mean. That *some* day you would want to go to a ball, or even a play—Shakespeare, of course, just to see how wicked it is; but you never want to go anywhere except church, or chapel, and tea-meetings.

Alston. I thought you always wished to go.

Dorothy. So I do—I was brought up to it; but I thought that sometimes you would wish *not* to go—that horrid weak tea, and salvation, out of big urns—and then I should have been obliged to stop quietly at home with you. Tell me now, did you ever gamble before you were good?

Alston. I never cared for gambling; it's not at all in my way.

Dorothy. Always too good, of course.

Alston. Not exactly good, perhaps. You see, it would never have paid me to gamble. After all, it's a capitalist's question, this Monte Carlo affair; at a rough calculation, say a million invested—not a first-class investment at best. I've often considered the matter seriously from a business point of view, but I find we can always turn over our money a deal quicker with brass at Birmingham.

Dorothy. But gambling is awfully wicked from a religious point of view, isn't it?

Alston. Awfully. But in our firm we always keep religion and business distinct. We should be in the *Gazette* if we didn't. We do a wholesale trade in Indian idols—little brass gods; but we always come down handsome for the missionaries.

Dorothy. Oh, Edward, you'll be dreadfully shocked when I tell you the truth; it's always so awful when one speaks the *real* truth; I never do so on that account—but I fear I'm a gambler at heart; isn't it dreadful? I've caught glimpses through those green doors—say you're angry, very, very angry; human nature is so very corrupt. But you *will* marry me, Edward—you won't give me up, will you?

Alston. You darling! Why, I do think you are a real woman after all. I loved you when I thought you were only a little puritan angel.

Dorothy. It's such a dreadful feeling, but I can't help it. If I could only venture five francs; it wouldn't be like playing for gold, would it? I know that's awfully wicked. Would you mind just going to the rooms when aunt is away? I should be cured if I lost it; I'm sure I should.

Alston. Of course I will.

Dorothy. Here it is, then (*offers coin*).

Alston. Nonsense; I've plenty in my pocket.

Dorothy. But you must take this one; I slept with it under my pillow last night. I was so awfully frightened, I didn't dare open my eyes; I was afraid of seeing something in the dark. Go, before aunt comes. Oh, you dear boy, it is so nice to be able to speak the *real* truth for the first time in all my life.

Alston. Real truth! (*shakes his head*). Our firm couldn't afford it. Telegrams, if anybody asks where I'm gone.

Dorothy. Telegrams! Only silver, that's a dear boy (*exit Alston*); gold is so awfully wicked. Truth! What a strange feeling—like washing one's face in cold water! I don't like it. He'll think— (*Calls*) Edward! What will he think? (*Calls*) Edward, come back; I've done something wrong at last, very wrong. I'll never speak the *real* truth again as long as I live (*cries*). (*Enter Miss Lindsay.*)

Miss Lindsay. Where's Edward?

Dorothy (*with hesitation*). He's gone, aunt.

Miss Lindsay. Quarrelled; little idiots!

Dorothy. Oh no, aunt! The telegrams! (*Aside*) Oh dear, the *real* truth! (*Aloud*) You look so happy, aunt, so radiant.

Miss Lindsay. I am happy, delighted. This is the most wicked place I was ever in in my whole life. Give me a downright wicked place for real enjoyment.

Dorothy. Aunty, dear.

Miss Lindsay. It means fighting, Dorothy. I love fighting; we come of a fighting family. Brimstone, can't you smell?

Dorothy. So fresh and beautiful, the lovely sea-breeze!

Miss Lindsay. You haven't my nose for wickedness.

We are in for it, Dorothy. I'm getting my armour to rights; I've had one skirmish already.

Dorothy. I thought we were to hurry on to Rome.

Miss Lindsay. I must leave Rome for the present; it's a big work, but it will keep. Take care how you walk.

Dorothy. This beautiful terrace—

Miss Lindsay. Pitfalls! man-traps! women-traps! Dorothy, beware—pitch darkness, sulphur! *He's* here, of course, ramping and tramping all over the place.

Dorothy. Why did we come, if it's so awful?

Miss Lindsay. I was told to get out when the train stopped. I was not told the reason why, but I know the reason now—Geraldine is here.

Dorothy. Geraldine Verney!

Miss Lindsay. I've watched her these years past—that empty-headed fool of a husband, and that beautiful face of hers. I've never been told to speak to her, but I am told to speak to her now. She's in danger, Dorothy, and I'm sent to help her.

Dorothy. A worldling, aunty.

Miss Lindsay. But I love her still, my Geraldine of the old days. She shall be my Geraldine once more.

Dorothy. A bad example for me, you always said, when I wanted to know her.

Miss Lindsay. The best example now, Dorothy! She has drunk the cup of pleasure to the dregs. Ask her whether the flavour is bitter or sweet.

Dorothy (*aside*). I've never had a taste.

(*Enter Sergent de Ville, holding some tracts in his hand.*)

Sergent (*to Miss Lindsay*). *C'est défendu, Madame!*

Miss Lindsay. Fiddlesticks, nonsense, young man!

Sergent. Distribution illégale. C'est défendu!

Miss Lindsay. Pooh! *Je suis une dame anglaise*—England!

Sergent. Monaco! C'est le royaume de Monaco. Code criminel, article cinq cent dix-huit.

Miss Lindsay. Five acres of kingdom, with five hundred criminal articles. It's as bad as English law. Absurd!

Sergent. C'est défendu dans le royaume de son altesse le prince de Monaco.

Miss Lindsay. Fiddlesticks with your Prince of Monacos! Be off with your nonsense!

Sergent. Au nom de la loi (*lays his hand on Miss Lindsay's shoulder*).

Miss Lindsay (*tearing herself away*). British subject. You dare! (*Shakes her umbrella. Dorothy shakes her sunshade in defiance. Sass enters.*)

Sass (*to Sergent de Ville*). *Comment! qu'est-ce que cela veut dire?*

Sergent (*to Sass*). *Distribution illégale, Monsieur* (*gives tracts to Sass*). *Article cinq cent dix-huit, code criminel de Monaco.*

Sass (*looking at tracts*). Ah! "Leetle Buttons;" I find him at last. (*To Sergent*) *Allez donc, imbécile; va, cochon.* (*Exit Sergent de Ville.*)

Sass (*bowing to Miss Lindsay*). Pardon me, "Leetle Buttons." I have ze honour to address Mees Lindsay Balham.

Miss Lindsay. Miss Lindsay, of Balham.

Sass (*bowing*). *Parfaitement.* Mees Balham Lindsay. Ah! I have heard of you; you are a *religion anglaise*—vot we call a *culte*. We have none at Monte Carlo for ze English. Ze Englishman will not *voyager* without his *religion*. We give him good hotel—good *table d'hôte*—*prix très modéré*—vot you call "home comforts": Huntley Palmer! Peek Freen! but without his *religion* he is not *comfortable*. The *établissement* ave ask

your Bishops for a *religion*, but dey will not give him; you shall be an English *religion*.

Miss Lindsay. But—but—I should anathematize the whole place—root and branch.

Sass. Zat is what ve want. You shall live free gratis, and ze Englishman shall be content. He shall make long stay now at Monte Carlo with his *religion* and his "home comforts."

Miss Lindsay (*with indignation*). Avaunt! My religion to bait a trap! Avaunt, I say. Come, Dorothy.

Dorothy. But it's a very kind offer, aunt.

Miss Lindsay. A son of perdition, Dorothy—avaunt. (*Sass bows profoundly.*)

(*Miss Lindsay and Dorothy retire up stage.*)

Sass (*sits*). "*Avaunt!*" *qu'est-ce que cela veut dire. Ah, c'est une espèce de compliment. Ah, ces Anglaises, elles sont un peu brusques, mais elles sont charmantes.*

Dorothy (*to Miss L.*). Geraldine's coming, aunt.

Miss Lindsay. I'll speak to her presently. A son of perdition. I like his impudence. Avaunt!

(*Miss Lindsay and Dorothy go out.*)

Sass. Ah, Madame Verney! *Les diamants* (*takes bracelet from his pocket*), *et les femmes, les femmes et les diamants. Ah, les billets de banque, elle a joué—elle a gagné, c'est bien, elle restera!*

(*Enter Mrs. Verney and Morley.*)

Mrs. Verney. I promise you nothing shall take me away. It's positively too delicious. A hundred napoleons—in what? Just half an hour—ridiculous! I repaid you the two napoleons you lent me to start with, didn't I? He shan't take me away; certainly not. I shall soon be able to pay all my debts at this rate. Fairyland, I declare!

Morley (*perceiving Sass*). And there's the presiding fairy. (*To Sass.*) Ah! M. Sass. Permit me, Mrs. Ver-

ney. I wish to introduce you to M. Sass, the ruler-in-chief of Monte Carlo.

Sass (*bowing profoundly*). And your most devoted servant, *Madame.*

Morley. Have you the prize bracelet? (*Sass shows bracelet.*)

Mrs. Verney. Lovely!

Sass. Permit me ze honour (*places bracelet on Mrs. Verney's wrist*). *Ah, comme cela va bien! Charmante, Madame.*

Mrs. Verney. Beautiful. Oh! if he would only stay. (*Returns bracelet*) I thank you, M. Sass.

Sass. I hope to return it to you von day. Command me, Madame, while you remain at Monte Carlo. (*Aside.*) *Ah, les diamants et les femmes. Tentation irrésistible.* (*Exit.*)

Morley. You shall have that bracelet. I promise it.

Mrs. Verney. How?

Morley. Your husband and myself are the crack shots, the Frenchmen can't touch us.

Mrs. Verney. But you may win. You are champion for Madame St. Preux.

Morley. But I can lose. I promise you the bracelet.

Mrs. Verney. Traitor to the French lady.

Morley. But true to you.

Mrs. Verney. Oh, he shall stay! I'm determined he shall stay. (*Enter Miss Lindsay and Dorothy.*) Heavens! Miss Lindsay, in the name of all wonders. Some particular friends, Captain Morley; evangelical gooddy-gooddies. I'd have cut them if I could, but I must say just one word. Go and tell my husband that I have won a hundred napoleons, that nothing on earth shall induce me to leave Monte Carlo.

Morley (*bows*) (*aside*). I too have won more than a hundred napoleons. (*Exit.*)

Mrs. Verney. Ah, Miss Lindsay, how d'ye do? and Dorothy, too! Why, you dear, good, virtuous people, how strange you should be in this wicked place.

Miss Lindsay. Not at all, Geraldine; you know my old love for wicked places.

Mrs. Verney. But little innocent Dorothy! Oh, Dorothy, how nice, and sweet, and fresh you look. May I kiss you, Dorothy?

Dorothy. Of course.

Mrs. Verney. But I'm a worldling, Dorothy.

Dorothy. But I love you, Geraldine (*kisses her*).

Mrs. Verney. Ah, Dorothy, I'm so unlike you. Gaiety and dissipation from morning to night; vanities.

Miss Lindsay. And vexations?

Mrs. Verney. Always vexations, Miss Lindsay; always thorns with the roses.

Dorothy. But you are a queen of society. I've read all about you. How handsome and bright you look. Oh, what a lovely dress, and I'm such an old dowd.

Mrs. Verney. Foolish girl—you look so fresh and charming in this simple dress. Come and sit down by my side, Dorothy. (*To Miss Lindsay*) I won't do her any harm. (*Dorothy and Mrs. Verney sit, Miss Lindsay sits on the other side of Mrs. Verney.*) That's right, Miss Lindsay, how good of you; like old times, isn't it? (*Dorothy and Miss Lindsay each take one of Mrs. Verney's hands.*) Ah, Dorothy, my world is not yours, a whirl of dazzle and excitement.

Dorothy. Our world is very dull and sober.

Mrs. Verney. Be content, Dorothy; all that glitters is not gold.

Miss Lindsay. But you are happy, Geraldine, in the world of your choice?

Mrs. Verney. Oh, very happy, Miss Lindsay, very happy. Only I think my world wouldn't suit Dorothy.

I always was different from you, Dorothy—a restless, excitable disposition.

Miss Lindsay. And your husband? I mustn't forget to ask after your husband.

Mrs. Verney. Quite well, I thank you. You have never seen my husband. Oh, we are very happy—very happy, indeed. we are. Are you going to stop here, or are you going on?

Miss Lindsay. We thought of Bordighera, for a month, and then Rome. (*Shakes umbrella.*) It's a big work.

Mrs. Verney. Why, we are going to Bordighera, this very afternoon.

Dorothy. Very quiet, isn't it? Too quiet for you.

Mrs. Verney. That's what I like, quite quiet. I love a quiet place. I say, Miss Lindsay, you wouldn't mind my coming to see you sometimes, and Dorothy. I mean taking walks with Dorothy.

Miss Lindsay. Mind! of course not. Why?

Mrs. Verney. Our paths of life have been so different.

Miss Lindsay. Paths join, Geraldine—paths join.

Mrs. Verney (*suddenly*). You dear, good, true woman (*throws her arms round Miss Lindsay's neck*). No, no. It's all a lie (*with tears*), I'm not happy, not happy. Thank heaven, I've met you again. Oh, it would do me so much good to be with you and Dorothy. Here come these false, hateful people. Oh, Dorothy, when we are at Bordighera together I shall be so different, the Geraldine of old times; you won't know me to-morrow. (*She rises and goes towards Madame St. Preux and Madame Frager, who enter. Miss Lindsay and Dorothy withdraw up stage.*)

Miss Lindsay (*to Dorothy*). She is in danger, Dorothy. Is the taste bitter or sweet?

St. Preux (*to Mrs. Verney*). Ah, *ma chère Madame*, victory!

Mrs. Verney. What?

Frager. Mr. Verney has yielded!

St. Preux. I gave you my word—the glory is mine. He yielded to my persuasion. You gave me your permission, *Madame.* Your other friends only completed the defeat.

Mrs. Verney (*in tone of regret*). We are to stay then?

St. Preux. Certainly. (*Aside*) She wanted, after all, to take that man away. (*Aloud*) What a bright time we shall have—what a charming party we shall make. Here's the Chevalier! (*Enter Vauban.*)

Vauban (*to Mrs. Verney*). I claim the victory.

St. Preux. It is false.

Vauban. I cannot part with my laurels. The *pigeons* won the day. Monsieur Verney cannot resist the hope of repeating the triumphs of Hurlingham at Monte Carlo. Why, ladies, your champions will be the favourites of the field. England and France in rivalry—how charming!

(*Morley enters.*)

Vauban. Ah! another claimant for the honour of this victory. Well, Morley?

Morley. I claim nothing. Mrs. Verney gained the day for herself—those hundred napoleons in half-an-hour.

Mrs. Verney (*aside*). Oh, accursed fate; if I had only met Miss Lindsay before I entered those rooms.

Vauban. Behold a husband in chains!

(*Enter Verney in conversation with Sass.*)

Mrs. Verney (*goes up to Verney*). I'm quite ready to start, Harry. I've seen quite enough of this place. One soon sees enough of it. My things are all packed.

Verney. Packed! nonsense! I've agreed to stay. Deuced good morning's work of yours—how much was it?

Mrs. Verney. A hundred napoleons. Take them (*offers her purse*).

Verney. No, no; your's.

Mrs. Verney. Take them, for heaven's sake; only let's go—let's go.

Verney. No; hang it—you plagued me to stop for your pleasure—I mean to stop for mine. Gad! there's money to be made out of this pigeon business—a pot of money, I tell you. Besides, I begin to like these people. That Madame St. Preux—devilish amusing. Vauban, a clever dog; and this fellow Sass—deuced civil.

Mrs. Verney. I wish to go very much; because I know some people going on to Bordighera.

Verney. What people? Nice people?

Mrs. Verney. My dear old friend, Miss Lindsay, and her niece.

Verney. Psalm singers, some of the old lot—likely, isn't it? I tell you I have resolved to stay—and stay I will. Gad! I thought you would be all smiles; but I never can please you. Your whims are like weather-cocks. I'm sick of it all. (*Turns away to group of Vauban, Morley, St. Preux, and Frager.*)

Mrs. Verney. Only married; nothing more. (*Turns to Miss Lindsay and converses.*)

(*Alston enters and speaks to Dorothy.*)

Dorothy. Oh! Edward, is it lost? Is the horrid thing lost.

Alston. No; five hundred francs, all in my pocket—very heavy.

Dorothy. Throw it away.

Alston. Throw money away? Never, in our firm.

Dorothy. I begin to smell brimstone. I am very

wicked. You shan't marry me; I shall make a wicked, bad wife. Leave me; go, Edward, go. (*Walks away.*)

Alston. I shall come, not go; but don't go so fast, Dorothy—the silver is awfully heavy.

Dorothy (*crying*). I tell you, it's sin, not silver. Oh, Edward, we are sheep—lost sheep.

Alston. Always my lamb. (*They go out, he wiping her eyes.*)

Verney (*to his group*). Come, let's try our luck for half an hour.

Group. Bravo!

Verney. If the wife wins, let's try what the husband can do. (*Goes up to Mrs. Verney and Miss Lindsay*) Here, Geraldine.

Mrs. Verney (*in tone of expostulation*). Miss Lindsay, Harry; my old friend, Miss Lindsay.

Verney (*bowing*). Good-morning, ma'am; happy to make your acquaintance. Come, Geraldine, let's have some of the lucky money you won this morning.

Mrs. Verney (*in tone of deprecation*). Harry—Miss Lindsay.

Verney. I am going to try my luck. Stay with Miss Lindsay till I return. (*Impatiently*) Give me the money. (*Takes money from Mrs. Verney.*) (*To St. Preux and Frager*) Come, ladies; let us pray for our lucky stars. Come, Chevalier—Morley, old boy; let's to the fore.

St. Preux (*to Mrs. Verney, as she goes out*). Am I not as good as my word? 'Monsieur Verney shall remain at Monte Carlo. (*Mrs. Verney shudders, but makes no reply.*) Come, Captain Morley, you are always a lucky player, whatever may be the stakes.

(*Verney, St. Preux, Frager, go out, followed reluctantly by Morley.*)

Vauban (*aside*). The screw *is* turned; the gossamer threads are links of steel. (*Exit.*)

Sass. Ah! c'est bien; la belle Anglaise shall stay.

Mrs. Verney (*to Miss Lindsay*). I know I was very wrong; I did play this morning; but don't tell Dorothy. Her sweet kiss has done me so much good. Oh, Miss Lindsay, don't go! These are not real friends; I've no real friends; you're the only real friend. I feel so sad and low—some dreadful presentiment. Don't go to-day; do stay here with me—one day—only one day.

Miss Lindsay. I will. (*Perceiving Sass*) Here, Monsieur (*Sass comes forward, and bows profoundly*); I accept your offer.

Sass. Bon, Madame (*turning away, and rubbing his hands*)—"Leetle Buttons," a *religion* at last! "Home comforts"—Huntley Palmer! Peek Freen!

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

Salon in the Hôtel de Paris. At end of stage, large windows opening on a verandah, with landscape background.

ST. PREUX *and* FRAGER *discovered.* ST. PREUX *sighs deeply.*

Frager. My soft pet, we have great blessings—the best *table d hôte* in France, that excellent *déjeûner* just now.

St. Preux. Yes, aunt; but that vision of my life is dying away, an English husband—what you call a home and respectability. Oh, tell me more about English respectability; I shall never know it, *mais n'importe.* What does it feel like? Tell me, dear aunt.

Frager. Like being better than other people.

St. Preux. How pleasant! It's so long since I felt that; and a home. What is what you call "a home life?"

Frager. A husband who goes out every day at nine, and returns at six.

St. Preux. Always at six?

Frager. Always, my angel—a dear little basket of fish in his hand.

St. Preux. How sweet!—a little poem, my aunt.

Frager. Dinner, my darling—seven o'clock sharp.

St. Preux. And that is "home"—sweet English home.

Frager. "Home, sweet home."

St. Preux. What a dream of peace!

Frager. And plenty, my child.

St. Preux. All lost! I shall have my vengeance upon her.

Frager. What vengeance, my sweet lamb?

St. Preux. I will destroy her English respectability. She has dared to win that man from me—a flirtation, she would call it. Let her beware; I will drive the consequences home to bitterness and shame. I will teach her the difference between a flirtation in England and a flirtation in France.

Frager. My amiable dove! (*Vauban enters.*)

St. Preux. Ah, Chevalier!

Vauban. Bon jour, Mesdames!

St. Preux. Mais asseyez-vous un instant. (*Vauban sits.*) *Bien!* tell me—I speak English for my good aunt is English—you are going with us to the ball at Nice to-night?

Vauban. Unhappily, no.

St. Preux. But your friend Monsieur Verney has asked me to go with their party—particularly asked me to go.

Vauban. Not to-night. We have an engagement at the Club. To-night is a bad ball. Next week is the grand ball of the season.

St. Preux. I have set my mind upon this ball to-night.

Vauban. Then you will go – a thousand to one you go; I bet on your going. I always back a woman's whim.

St. Preux. Don't be absurd.

Vauban. Book the bet: that cat's-eye ring with diamonds in Breguet's window against a pair of gloves. You'll be sure to go; I shall win the gloves.

Frager. I'm witness.

Vauban. Bien, Madame. (*Goes up stage to verandah*).

St. Preux (*aside*). I understand; they are to play for high stakes to-night. Verney ruined! Shall I save him? They shoot the ties to-day; if he loses the match, he knows that I shall win the bracelet.

Frager. The ring, my child—what an absurd bet. Let's go and look at it; in Breguet's window, he said. Of course you won't go to the ball to-night.

(*Morley enters in verandah and speaks to Vauban.*)

St. Preux. Nous verrons, ma chère tante. Ah, Morley—with a bouquet in his hand for her—shall I save Verney? How strange—a man's safety in a woman's whim. (*Exeunt*).

(*Vauban and Morley come down from terrace.*)

Morley. Once for all, no!

Vauban. For ever, yes!

Morley. Can I as a gentleman?

Vauban. The peach is ripe. Hold your hands; it will quickly fall.

Morley. I should be hounded out of every club in London! What! you win this man's money through those scoundrels at the Club, and then through me you

lend him that very money that he may play again and again, with certain ruin in the end; and this man my friend! Heavens! that I should endure this dishonour and live!

Vauban. Life's a strong habit.

Morley. But this end: Verney ruined—utterly ruined!

Vauban. But the peach is ripe.

Morley. No, curse it! Fooled by a woman, led on by her smiles, lured by her words.

Vauban. Words for *you*—and your London world has been at her feet—that woman your slave. What a triumph for a man!

Morley. But that man ruined—my friend—a fool, be it said; but if he had married a better woman! No, by Heavens! we break off this cursed game! To hell with your infernal schemes, once for all! (*Flings bouquet on table.*)

Vauban. Softly. The bouquet, I mean; flowers are not robust. She comes! Speak to her; break the spell; be a man of honour and a gentleman.

Morley. Curses on you! You know the charm by which she binds me. (*Mrs. Verney enters.*)

Mrs. Verney. Ah, gentlemen, good morning. I'm afraid I've kept you waiting. A lovely morning for our drive to Turbia. Well, Captain Morley, where's my bouquet? You're my florist in this land of flowers. (*Morley gives her the bouquet.*) Thanks! how lovely, and only thanks for payment. Delightful economy. I've been half ruined by flowers in London.

Morley (*looking in her face*). But tears! Has that—has he dared?

Mrs. Verney. My husband?—oh, no. He does not care enough for me to make me cry. But (*to Vauban*), Chevalier, tell me—Mr. Verney is losing heavily at the Club, I'm sure he is.

Vauban. What has he told you?

Mrs. Verney. Nothing—not one word. But I am sure he is. He can't afford it, indeed he can't. Do try to turn him from this accursed fascination.

Vauban. Ma chère Madame, do not grieve yourself. It's as mall affair, *parole d'honneur.* We have both lost —I have lost more heavily than he has; but it is a bagatelle. Ah, well, I shall observe your commands. Here is Monsieur Verney, ready to meet his rival in the pigeon match this afternoon. Ah, Madame, the bracelet shall be yours. (*Aside to Mrs. Verney*) *N'ayez pas peur.* I shall talk to Monsieur *tres sérieusement, parole d'honneur.*

(*Verney enters. Vauban addresses him.*)

Mrs. Verney (*aside*). There is a false ring in that man's words. No chance of help from him; I must try that other plan.

Morley. We ought to start.

Mrs. Verney. No hurry. Let the Chevalier speak to him. You can talk to me, Captain Morley. We can talk as well here as in the carriage.

Morley. Better. But still those tears. He *is* cruel.

Mrs. Verney. No, not openly cruel—not violence. But—you are an old friend, I can talk to you. What is life without sympathy? Oh, for some ray of light to break upon this dark, cheerless existence!

Morley. An old friend, you say. Be assured of that.

Mrs. Verney. I know it. Oh, the utter indifference he shows towards me—cold, freezing indifference; and then every temptation at a woman's feet, and then no mercy on a woman. But you are an old friend; it does me so much good to speak to you, to tell you all I feel and suffer. See if the carriage is waiting. (*Morley goes up to verandah.*) And that vain fool thinks I love him. What matter if a woman speak lying words? Lying words have been spoken many a time to women.

Morley (*returning*). The carriage is here. Oh! Mrs. Verney—Geraldine—the old name!

Mrs. Verney. The old name—the old thoughts. But all that's passed. Let's go. (*Going to her husband*) We must start; the carriage is waiting.

Verney (*breaking away from his conversation with Vauban*). Pshaw! let it wait! The Chevalier is telling me—(*to Vauban*). All but perfect?

Vauban (*to Verney, in low tone*). One link, and I've half got it, and then the scheme is infallible. Snap your fingers at chance; this is certainty; wealth for us both.

Mrs. Verney (*aside*). As I feared, that scoundrel is luring him on. (*Aloud*) Gentlemen, I am waiting. Mr. Verney!

Vauban. Madame, a thousand pardons. (*To Verney*) Madame commands; we must obey.

Verney. I can't go. Besides, it is too late for Turbia; we must give it up for to-day. (*To Vauban*) I must work this scheme out at once.

Mrs. Verney. But, Harry, I insist upon going!

Verney. Well, go—go!

Mrs. Verney. How can I go alone?

Verney. Hang it all—I tell you, I can't take you (*with impatience.*) Well, go or stay, but don't bother me at this moment.

(*Verney converses intently with Vauban.*)

Mrs. Verney (*to Morley*). My husband is busy; will you take this drive with me?

Morley. Charmed, I'm sure.

Mrs. Verney. Thanks. (*To Verney*) Very well, Harry, Captain Morley is going to drive with me. (*Verney is too engaged with Vauban to give heed to Mrs. Verney.*) You hear, Harry; Captain Morley is going to drive with me?

Verney (*to Vauban, without paying attention to Mrs.*

Verney). We must work this out at once. We can't do it here. Let's go on the terrace; we shall be quiet there.

(*Verney draws Vauban towards terrace.*)

Mrs. Verney. Harry! (*Verney and Vauban go out.*) (*Mrs. Verney throws down bouquet, sinks into a chair, and bursts into tears.*) (*Aside*) How can I save him? Oh, Heavens! how can I save him? Even jealousy is strangled by this accursed demon, play!

Morley. I feel for you, I do indeed, Geraldine.

Mrs. Verney (*in cold tones*). Mrs. Verney, not Geraldine; you forget, Captain Morley.

Morley. Forgive me, but when I see you weep—when I see his cruel indifference—

Mrs. Verney. My husband, Captain Morley.

Morley. You are overwrought; the air will do you good. Shall we go?

Mrs. Verney. Go! Go where?

Morley. Our drive.

Mrs. Verney. Our drive! What do you mean?

Morley. Our drive to Turbia.

Mrs. Verney. I said I was not going.

Morley. Pardon me, it was arranged that I was to drive with you.

Mrs. Verney. I tell you I am not going.

Morley. What have I done? Why this sudden change of manner? (*Piqued*) Perhaps it would be more agreeable if I said, Good morning.

Mrs Verney. Good morning, Captain Morley. (*He bows and turns away.*) (*Aside*) No, no, I dare not drive him away. (*Aloud*) Captain Morley, forgive me; I hardly know what I say or do. Don't go away. We won't drive. Let us walk in the gardens.

Morley (*with warmth*). Forgive me, Mrs. Verney.

Mrs. Verney. Geraldine, if you like. An old friend, you know; come along. But my bouquet?

Morley. There it is. (*Goes to pick up bouquet.*)

Mrs. Verney (*aside*). Oh, Harry! shall I ever be able to save you? (*Morley gives her bouquet.*) (*Aloud*) Thanks! What a shame to have flung down your gift.

Morley. Flowers perish, but true sympathy can never be flung away; don't forget that, Mrs. Verney.

Mrs. Verney. I said you might call me Geraldine. Let's go; I'm dying for air. (*She staggers forward.*)

Morley. My arm. (*She rests for a moment on his arm. She then starts from him.*)

Mrs. Verney. Thanks. It's nothing. (*Aside*) Oh, accursed task, and my husband a victim in Vauban's hands. (*Aloud*) Let us go, Captain Morley, let us go, I can't breathe here. (*She hurries out, followed by Morley.*)

(*Enter Sass and Alston in conversation. Sass has a book of trade diagrams in his hand.*)

Sass. All brass—*vraiment*, all brass?

Alston. Best brass; first-class article.

Sass. You have made brass for many churches.

Alston. Dozens, all the world over.

Sass. Bien! Ze *établissement* want ze best brass for dere beautiful new *cathédrale* at Monaco—*tiens, regardez ce frippon-là* (*points to Vauban on terrace in conversation with Verney.*) *Un voleur*, but ze *établissement*, he build churches, schools, roads, everyting which is good and beautiful; but *ce frippon-là*, he cheat at hees private clubs.

Alston. Hang it all, but Monte Carlo ruins a goodish few.

Sass. Ruin! *Comment* ruin? Ruin everywhere—ruin at your Stock Exchange, ruin with your companies, ruin with vot you call your liquidators; but at Monte Carlo, ruin with honour, ruin with honesty; ruin, if you will, but honest ruin; a fortune, if you may, but an honest fortune; but *ce frippon-là*, he ave his hand on

dat Englishman Verney. He cheat him at his club, thirty tousand pound stirling, and ze *établissement* gain nothing, *vraiment* nothing—ze *établissement* which blesses ze *pauvre* of Monte Carlo with his charity; zey learn to read, ze poor man, zey learn to pray. (*Putting his hand on the diagrams*) Ze best brass, *parole d'honneur?*

Alston. Honour bright.

Sass. Honneur, he is so bright. *Tiens*, I draw ze contract *exprès*. He shine like brass. (*Exit Sass.*)

Alston. A good morning's work, by Jove!

(*Enter Dorothy.*)

Dorothy. Oh, Edward, that awful man! Aunt says if ever she saw anybody like *somebody* (*points down*) it's that man. He'll ruin you!

Alston. No, he won't; I shall make a rare profit out of him.

Dorothy. No, Edward, no one ever made a profit out of dealings with *him;* never!

Alston. Trust us, at Birmingham. We can make a profit out of *him* or anybody else—short of hostile tariffs, of course.

Dorothy. I'll never wish to be wicked again; I've smelt the sulphur and seen his foot.

Alston. Whose foot?

Dorothy. His hoof, I mean. Edward, dear, when we are married we shall be so good, so strict, so religious, shan't we? No balls, no playhouses—promise me—not even to see how wicked they are?

Alston. Sometimes, perhaps, just once in a way.

Dorothy. Never, never! I've seen that awful life—the agony of a woman's heart, the hollowness of a woman's smile; a husband, but no friend, no protector. Oh, Edward, perhaps a quiet tea, with cakes and negus, but no supper, not one bit, promise me.

Alston. No supper?

Dorothy. A dinner sometimes; but a serious dinner.

Alston. They generally are serious.

Dorothy. That's why I like dinners—very serious.

Alston. Nothing else?

Dorothy. Nothing; that's the limit of worldly dissipation; but plenty of meetings of all kinds—as many May Meetings as you like.

Alston. The merry month of May!

Dorothy. Sober, edifying conversation, serious books—you shall read them to me, Edward, in the long evenings, you darling! It will be so sweet, won't it?

Alston. Awfully sweet! A trifle dull, perhaps.

Dorothy. Oh, no! never dull. We shall be so happy, so bright, so joyous, because we shall be so good; the little birds won't be happier—to be good is to be happy. (*Sighs.*)

Alston. But you look unhappy.

Dorothy. The five hundred francs!

Alston. Where are they?

Dorothy. On my conscience—I once eat cold plum pudding as a child. I wanted to slip them into aunt's charity bag, when no one was looking. The little Barbary Jews, Edward, dear; they've no clothes to wear—isn't it awful?

Alston. Eh! I wish I hadn't, this hot weather.

Dorothy. That money would bring a curse on the little Barbary Jews.

Alston. Cursing, certainly. If it put 'em into short clothes in a climate as hot as this.

(*Enter Miss Lindsay.*)

Miss Lindsay. Hey dey! you two. Always at it—quarrelling or making love, I never know which. Come, no fiddlesticks and nonsense just now; the battle is raging round us. Where is she, Dorothy?

Dorothy. On the terrace, with that man.

Miss Lindsay. Go to her, Dorothy. Don't leave her.

Alston. Pardon me, Miss Lindsay. I don't think Mrs. Verney is a proper companion for Dorothy.

Miss Lindsay. But I think Dorothy is a proper companion for her. None of your cotton-wool virtue for me! It's a battle for a woman's soul. Cling to her, Dorothy; fight for her! When she stands alone—and she does stand alone—stand by her side. Don't budge one inch. Maybe, the warm grasp of your girlish hand —maybe, one kiss from your pure lips—and she will be saved.

Alston. But Dorothy's own reputation!

Miss Lindsay. In my family we were born to fight, not run away. We have never counted odds—India, every man among us dead on those battlefields. We have always risked everything for the sake of duty. Go, Dorothy, bring her to me. (*Exit Dorothy.*) No, Edward Alston, if goodness made me a coward, I'd be a sinner to-morrow! There's goodness and goody-goody, mind you; and goody-goody is my detestation.

(*Enter Sass, with document.*)

Sass. Ze contract—here he is (*gives document to Alston*). I love to deal with ze man of honour. Always ze best brass!

Miss Lindsay. Honour, eh? Brass, no doubt!

Alston (*to Miss Lindsay*). High Art, Brummagem—for their new Cathedral.

Miss Lindsay. Tomfoolery!

Alston. Nothing like tomfoolery for profit. Fifty pounds to the good for your Roman mission.

Miss Lindsay. Conversion out of their own pockets

Alston. We can convert anything in Birmingham; a little lacquer, that's all.

Miss Lindsay. You're a clever lad, Edward Alston; —out of their own pockets!—a very clever lad!

Alston (*looking at Sass*). What's the matter, M. Sass?

Sass. I am von miserable. My heart bleed for your compatriot, Monsieur Verney. Save him! He shall be *ruiné* this night—a *complot* at zat club to cheat him every *sou. Ah! c'est dommage!* Thirty thousand pound stirling, and not one sou go to ze *établissement*—it is too hard. Now for ze *tir aux pigeons.* I must go to make ready vot you call ze pigeon shoot. It is cruel—*très* cruel—ze *pauvre établissement.* (*Exit.*)

Alston. It's true enough. They mean to ruin Verney, that's clear.

(*Enter Dorothy.*)

Miss Lindsay. Is she coming?

Dorothy. She promised me to come; but she sent me away almost rudely. But she's not herself, I can see that—and that hateful man always at her side!

Miss Lindsay. Ah! (*To Alston*) Can you get admission to that Marina Club?

Alston. I can get anywhere. Our firm—it's a talisman.

Miss Lindsay. Watch their play.

Alston. I must play myself, or they will be suspicious.

Miss Lindsay. Then play.

Dorothy. My Edward! Oh, aunt!

Miss Lindsay. Your Edward's no fool; if there is foul play, he'll find it out.

Dorothy. But gambling! oh, aunt!

Miss Lindsay. I'd gamble myself, if I could save that poor fool from destruction.

Dorothy. But I thought gambling was so wrong.

Miss Lindsay. Nothing's wrong when you are fighting for people's souls. Fair weather Christians, eh? You've a deal to learn, my child, before you know what good-

ness really is. Goodness is a regular Turk when the fighting begins.

(*Mrs. Verney enters, and goes up to Dorothy.*)

Mrs. Verney. Dorothy, dear, forgive me those words. I didn't know what I said. Ah, Miss Lindsay, a week ago I asked you to stay here with me; but I ask you to go now, to leave me—you can't help me!

Miss Lindsay. I'm usually esteemed a helpful body.

Mrs. Verney. I must fight this battle out by myself. Your presence only distracts me. It's a terrible battle —ruin, shame! Dorothy, dear, you are going to be married to a true, good man. Would that I—just when I wanted help, counsel—that old world of my youth which I despised—sober, dull, I thought it— Oh, Dorothy, sometimes think of me, driven to and fro in that awful whirlwind of frivolous life—no resting-place for body or soul. (*To Alston*) Take her away, Mr. Alston. Leave me; I want to be alone. I may still kiss you, Dorothy (*kisses her*); but leave me, there's a darling. Go; I ask you to go!

Miss Lindsay. Go, Dorothy.

(*Alston and Dorothy go out.*)

Mrs. Verney. And you, too, Miss Lindsay; you must go and leave me.

Miss Lindsay. I never go; I always stop.

Mrs. Verney. Do you see what I'm doing? Do you see that I am deliberately accepting the addresses of that man, Captain Morley?

Miss Lindsay. I see it.

Mrs. Verney. And you remain?

Miss Lindsay. Because I see it. But I see more than that (*significantly*).

Mrs. Verney. Can you see? Is it possible? Can your true merciful eyes see this awful burden which is cast upon my weak strength? Oh, woman of frivolous

life—oh, miserable butterfly of fashion!—to you is given the salvation of a man's life, a man's honour. You, who have lived on that border-land of society—you, who have stepped upon, but not past, the line of sin—prudence for a guardian angel—you—you are to be a saving example to this man, his counsellor, his monitor, his true wife, to save him from this gambler's hell—how? Love! That's long lost between us. Esteem! That's lost in contempt. Oh, Miss Lindsay! you have seen it all—all my misery, my despair!

Miss Lindsay. I have, Geraldine; and I have seen more than this—dark as it is! I have seen the making of a true woman in you still.

Mrs. Verney. Bless you for those words of hope! There's strength in them, and the world I have loved and served only gives me scorn and cruel sneers. But no time to lose, in a few hours he will be lost—this night, maybe—lost! ruined!

Miss Lindsay. Have faith!

Mrs. Verney. Too slow! Something quick, rapid, sharp; something to tear the glamour from his eyes; something to drive the cursed spirit from his soul. He's coming, leave me; despair is my counsellor. I may save him yet; but leave me.

Miss Lindsay. I will save him.

Mrs. Verney. How?

Miss Lindsay. It's an old-fashioned method—prayer! It can do no harm, Geraldine; and my kiss can do no harm, either. (*Offers to kiss her.*)

Mrs. Verney. Not now! My lips must utter shameful things—shame, as an antidote for shame. He would laugh prayer to scorn.

Miss Lindsay. They came to laugh, but they remained to pray. I always keep my powder dry. A hundred tracts in my pouch—pungent, and very searching for the

natural man. "Little Buttons!" He won't laugh at that, I warrant—heavy guns! (*Exit Miss Lindsay.*)

Mrs. Verney. The making of a true woman in you still!

(*Enter Verney.*)

Verney. Gad, Geraldine, we've done the trick at last. Heaps of money ahead!

Mrs. Verney. Folly! madness!

Verney. Well, I've been hit. I don't deny it. You saw it—you couldn't help seeing it; but now we hold the trump cards—fortune a dead certainty. This very evening we begin our campaign.

Mrs. Verney. Listen to me, Harry; you must take me away from this place.

Verney. Pooh! now that my hand clutches fortune by the throat.

Mrs. Verney. At once—at once! not another hour!

Verney. What do you mean?

Mrs. Verney. I have still the right to tell you to take me away. Captain Morley, you must have seen it!

Verney. Seen what?

Mrs. Verney. His attentions to me!

Verney. Scores of men have paid you attentions, but you never told me to take you away from London in the middle of the season.

Mrs. Verney. I tell you to do so now!

Verney. Don't be a fool, Geraldine! This is some stupid ruse of yours to spoil my game on the very threshold of fortune.

Mrs. Verney. Must I speak more plainly? Will nothing open your eyes?

Verney. Morley! Find some better excuse—with your prudent, clever head. What did you tell me? A life of utter seclusion, no longer a queen of fashion, no longer a field for vanity and display; those words

went home to roost, Geraldine; your woman's insatiable vanity—I can trust to it; it will guard my honour as well as yours. This Morley — I use him for my purpose. Don't be absurd, Geraldine. Tears! Laughter, I should say, at such a transparent pretext. I am going to play out this game of fortune at every table where I can get a chance, be assured of that.

Mrs. Verney. Can nothing open your eyes? Sharpers, blacklegs—you are their victim! That Chevalier Vauban —he is leading you to destruction!

Verney. Vauban! I tell you half this scheme is mine. He suggested it, but it was imperfect; my discovery has rendered it infallible.

Mrs. Verney. A palpable device to lure you on. Listen to me, that man will be your ruin!

Verney. Then it is Vauban, not Morley, I have to fear. You betray yourself, Geraldine; a wild goose chase to carry you off from Captain Morley's attentions, hey? Vauban, not Morley. Listen to me; you have ruined me enough by your extravagances; I am trying to repair the loss. Think of those costumes, wicked in their cost—a queen of fashion! Think of that reckless expenditure; and then just leave me alone to recoup myself as I may.

(*Enter waiter.*)

Waiter. On attend monsieur. Le tir aux pigeons aura lieu tout de suite. (*Exit Waiter.*)

Verney. I'm coming. Gad! I'm in splendid form to-day; the glow of success runs in my veins. You'll get that bracelet, Geraldine? (*Exit.*)

Mrs. Verney (*tries to follow him*). Harry! Harry! for mercy's sake! He will be lost before my eyes—drowned in that horrible vortex; and here I stand on this fatal shore powerless to save! Every gentle influence of a wife utterly lost—forfeited by my own miserable con-

duct! What's left?—what desperate straw of chance?—what? what? (*St. Preux and Frager appear on the verandah.*) That woman! He promised to go to that ball at Nice to-night at her request. Only let him be saved from that accursed table; be it angel or devil, let him be saved! (*Advances to meet Madame St. Preux with a smile.*) *Enfin, ma chère Madame* (*they kiss*), I've been looking for you everywhere. The arrangements for this evening— (*Shot outside.*) Hark! the pigeon shooting has begun; the ties are being decided. We are rivals in this match, but great friends, I'm sure we are. You have my best wishes for victory.

St. Preux. Chère Madame, je vous accorde les miens.

Mrs. Verney. If you win, I shall clasp the bracelet on your arm.

St. Preux. Et moi aussi, je serai charmé.

Mrs. Verney. I have ordered the carriage for Nice. You are my guest, recollect, in all the arrangements; it will be such a delightful ball.

St. Preux. You are too good.

Mrs. Verney. My husband, Captain Morley, and ourselves; we shall make a charming *partie carrée.*

St. Preux. Vraiment charmante. I am sorry, but I am not sure I can go. *Ma pauvre tante,* she is *un peu souffrante; n'est-ce pas, ma tante?*

Frager. I'm not well—not at all well.

Mrs. Verney. Nothing very serious, I hope; a slight headache only?

Frager. Not a headache—not a headache.

St. Preux. Pas grand'chose, but *la tante* does not like to be alone.

Mrs. Verney. Only for this evening.

Frager. I shall be worse if I'm left, I know I shall.

Mrs. Verney. My husband won't go, unless you go.

St. Preux. It won't prevent your going. Captain Morley—

Mrs. Verney. An old friend, indeed; but that couldn't be. Besides, as a profound secret, I'm quite tired of Captain Morley.

St. Preux, You have seen so much of him lately.

Mrs. Verney. Too much, I assure you; he has become a perfect bore.

St. Preux. I should not have thought so from your manner.

Mrs. Verney. One must talk to some one—my husband never talks to me. Captain Morley is nothing more than a friend. (*St. Preux smiles.*) *Ma chère,* if you care for him, I assure you I am not your rival. At least let us be friends—men are not worth quarrelling about; loyal friendship. You can help me now—seriously, you can help me—to save my husband from this awful mania for the tables. Ask him to go to this ball. He will yield to your persuasion, I know he will. To-night is a fatal night; if he plays at the Marina he will be utterly lost and ruined. Should I ask you to save my husband, if I cared for another man? If I had known that you cared for Captain Morley! I never knew it, never suspected it, till this moment.

St. Preux. But he cares for you. (*Huzzahs without.*) Listen! the cry of victory; the bracelet will be yours.

Mrs. Verney. Yours, *ma chère,* whoever wins it; yours by victory, or yours by gift.

(*Enter Sass, with bracelet.*)

Sass. Ah, Madame Verney, you have gained. It is lovely. It was worth waiting at Monte Carlo. (*Perceiving St. Preux*) *Mais pardon,* two cannot win. (*To St. Preux*) Better fortune, madame, next time. (*Presents bracelet to Mrs. Verney.*)

(*Vauban enters*)

Mrs. Verney (*to St. Preux*). Give me your arm, dear madame—my promise. (*Clasps bracelet on St. Preux's arm.*) How well it will look at the ball to-night!

St. Preux. It will; but you are too good — too generous. (*To Vauban*) Ah, Chevalier, you will win the gloves, after all. (*Vauban shrugs his shoulders.*)

Vauban (*aside*). These two women in accord! I must throw down the apple of discord. (*Morley enters.*) (*Aloud*) Ah, Morley, beaten, eh? You did not shoot well, *mon ami.*

Morley (*tries to prevent St. Preux from hearing*). My best, I tell you. Hush!

Vauban (*taking care that St. Preux shall hear*). *Che, che,* as they say at Rome, your best was very bad. If it had been another man, I should have sworn that you threw the chances away.

Morley. Silence, I say! Can't you understand?

Vauban. Well, it looked—if you had not been a man of honour, of undoubted honour—

Morley. None of this absurd jesting. (*Morley forces Vauban back.*)

St. Preux (*to Mrs. Verney*). Take your bracelet, madame. Your lover lost that you might win; I will not wear his bracelet at second hand. (*To Frager*) *Ma chère tante,* I shall remain with you this evening.

Mrs. Verney. Listen to me, Madame. Here, Captain Morley. (*Morley turns from Vauban.*) (*To Vauban, Sass, and Frager*) Pray, don't go; this is no secret. (*To St. Preux*) You publicly accuse me of having a lover in Captain Morley. I will tell you the exact truth now. I have been deceiving you both—making tools of you both. I fling you away because you are useless. My husband is a prey to swindlers and blacklegs, he is maddened by this cursed thirst for gaming. I have clung to every miserable straw to save him. I have had to stoop

very low—a husband's jealousy, I vainly hoped; and I made Captain Morley my tool. Oh, Captain Morley, I have fooled you with false words, as you have fooled many a woman ere now—that deliciously sinful tour through the capitals of Europe, dogged by *ennui* and the remorse which follows satiety. (*To St. Preux*) I have stooped lower still; I have used your miserable toils to divert my husband's attention from that accursed play. And you have both failed me.

Morley. By heavens! Mrs. Verney!

St. Preux. This insolence!

Mrs. Verney. This truth, Madame. I restore your lover—be happy with his dregs of love! Take this bracelet, M. Sass (*gives bracelet to Sass*). Give it to the victor; let him bestow it where he likes. I'll not accept Captain Morley's treacherous gift. (*Miss Lindsay enters.*) Ah, Miss Lindsay—one friend! (*Goes to Miss Lindsay.*)

Miss Lindsay. What's happened?

Mrs. Verney. I've quarrelled with my friends.

Miss Lindsay. Friends!

Mrs. Verney. I've torn off the mask. I'll tell you all, but presently. I must find him; he's not lost yet; I've still one desperate chance of saving him! (*Exit Mrs. Verney.*)

Miss Lindsay. One moment; a parting shot (*throws down some tracts*). "Pots of Honey; or, Tommy's Temptation." (*Exit Miss Lindsay*)

Sass (*aside*). I like *la belle* Verney. (*Looks at bracelet.*) Hearts, not *diamants!* But she shall not save her husband from Vauban's clutch. (*Exit Sass.*)

St. Preux (*to Frager*). *Ma chère tante*, her brutal words.

Frager. My suffering lamb.

St. Preux. She is so respectable. I suffer, because I do not know how to be avenged.

Frager. Console yourself, my dove; respectability often wears into holes, and requires a deal of darning. (*Exeunt Frager and St. Preux.*)

Vauban. Insular, but magnificent; I wouldn't have missed the sight. (*To Morley*) *Eh bien?*

Morley. Why the deuce couldn't you hold your tongue?

Vauban. Justice. I had backed you, Morley. I was a little hurt and angry. I never meant the St. Preux to hear; she has such cursedly sharp ears. *Mais n'importe, mon ami*, it only exploded the mine a little sooner. The better for you; she has made a fool of you long enough.

Morley. I have never met with such treatment before. If I have ever loved a woman—if I have ever been ready to sacrifice the prospects of my life—flung in my face! Gad! I shall be laughed at for this—every whipper snapper that I know, that's the worst of it. It's devilish hard for a man to be fooled in this way!

Vauban. The worst may be repaired. You may still have your revenge. That woman may still be at your feet. (*Verney enters, memorandum-book in hand.*) Ah, Verney, how go the calculations?

Verney. The system works out better and better. Look at these figures. (*Shows book to Vauban.*)

Vauban. Ma foi, c'est magnifique. We are millionaires already!

Verney. Have you arranged with Morley? Can you manage it, Morley?

Vauban. Morley will arrange everything with the bankers. (*To Morley*) You must start at once for Nice. Drive there, and then get back by the mail train.

Verney. You have the documents, eh, Morley?

Morley. Everything—I will arrange everything.

Verney. Thanks.

Morley (*aside*). Gad! that woman shall kneel to me —a bitter *amende.*

Verney. Start as soon as you can.

Vauban. At once. A word as to my own affairs before you go. (*To Morley*) At your feet, Morley, at your feet.

(*Exeunt Morley and Vauban.*)

(*Verney sits at table, draws from his pocket a pack of cards, deals as for "rouge et noir," notes results in pocket-book, mutters from time to time the French gaming terms, as "Couleur perd, rouge gagne," etc., "Le jeu est fait, rien ne va plus," etc., etc.*) Magnificent discovery—to triumph over chance, to make gain or loss indifferent, to win in despite of adverse fortune; two men in all Europe—Vauban and Harry Verney.

(*Enter Mrs. Verney. She watches her husband in silence. He does not perceive her presence, so absorbed is he by the cards. She comes forward.*)

Mrs. Verney (*aside*). My last stake! Caution! Keep still, beating heart! If I lose now, he is lost. If all links of sympathy had not been broken, I might go to him and cry on my knees that the vain, frivolous past had passed away; that through bitter anguish I had been aroused to a sense of my miserable, hollow, unwifely life; that the thought of duty—of wifely duty—was returning to my soul. But the links are broken; he would fling me away with a sneer or a curse; and then all hope would be lost. I dare not run the risk. My example led him into this awful danger. I cannot save him through love; I must save him through shame! (*Goes to writing-table and sits.*) (*Aloud*) Harry, I don't want to disturb you.

Verney. You do disturb me!

Mrs. Verney. I want to know what you are going to do. Are you going to dine here at the *table d'hôte?*

Verney. No, I shall dine at the Club; I shall be at the Club all the evening.

Mrs. Verney. All the evening!

Verney. Yes, I tell you; all the evening.

Mrs. Verney. Very well, I won't bother you any more. (*Aside*) There is no escape; the accursed letter must be written! (*Writes*) "Come, as you propose, at ten o'clock. He will be away all the evening. Your loving Geraldine." (*Places letter in envelope and writes address*) "Captain Morley, Hotel de Paris, Numéro 55." (*Takes some letters from her pocket, places Morley's letter among them, and for a time watches her husband play.*)

Verney (*aside*). Gad! there's something wrong here—a flaw in the scheme. I burn with hope, or shiver with doubt. It's a hellish work at best—a sickening, weary work! A good angel coming now might drag me away—a mother, a wife; a mother's love, a wife's love. (*Mrs. Verney rings bell, and then approaches Verney with the letters in her hand.*) (*With sarcasm*) A wife's love! (*He looks up*). Well, what is it? You disturb my calculations!

Mrs. Verney. Nothing. You've nothing for the post, I suppose?

Verney. Nothing.

Mrs. Verney. Shall you be very late to-night?

Verney. Probably; as late as things go.

Mrs. Verney. I shall take a drive before the *table d'hôte*, so we shan't meet till very late this evening, or perhaps to-morrow morning. (*She lets Morley's letter slip down at her husband s feet.*) (*Waiter enters.*)

Waiter. Yes, madame.

Mrs. Verney. Deliver these letters directly. (*Gives letters to waiter, who bows and goes out.*) (*She goes up stage to verandah and watches Verney.*) The bitter cup of degradation is drained to the last drop. He don't see it! Oh, if this last chance be lost! He does see it! Merciful Heaven! (*Verney picks up letter.*) Saved! saved! (*She hurries out.*)

Verney. Geraldine, you've dropped a letter. Here! Why, confound it, she's gone! (*He holds the letter in his hand for awhile mechanically, but his mind is quickly repossessed by his all-absorbing thought, and he lets the letter drop from his hand.*) If *couleur* gain twenty-one times running? Impossible! Gad! but I must work out the figures thoroughly. Every test—every sharp test till I'm quite sure of the result. (*Vauban enters.*) Here, Vauban, say a run of twenty-one against us, eh?

Vauban. No run can hurt us either way; I've worked every figure. Here, you've dropped some of your cards. (*Picks up cards and letter; puts cards on table, but retains letter.*) Run through the figures for yourself; that's the way to give you confidence. (*Verney calculates.*) *C'est bien, mon ami, je vous assure.* (*Aside, holding letter*) *C'est très bien,* Madame Verney. (*He goes out.*)

(*Miss Lindsay enters on terrace, and comes down to Verney's table as the Curtain falls.*

ACT III.

Mrs. Verney's apartments in the Hôtel de Paris. On the right, entrance to bedroom with portière; on the left, closed door, with portière opening into the adjoining apartments. At centre of the stage, large double entrance doors opening into corridor. Handsome furniture. At rising of Curtain the room is dark. (*Voices in corridor.*)

Alston (*without*). *Garçon!*

Dorothy (*without*). *J'ai perdu la clef.*

Alston (*without*). *Ouvrez la porte, s'il vous plaît.*

Thomas (*without*). *Bien, mademoiselle;* this way, miss.

(*Opens door centre.*) Mrs. Verney is not here; I will let you in through her room. (*Enters with candle in hand, followed by Dorothy and Alston. Thomas goes to door L. and unlocks it.*) This door opens into your room, miss; I will send the chambermaid with the key of your own door directly.

Dorothy. Thank you. (*Thomas goes out by centre door.*) Wait here, Edward, I'll be back in half a minute. (*Exit by door Left.*)

Alston (*alone*). That fellow Verney to be gulled and swindled in this bare-faced manner. Asses men are! Gambling is such an infernally bad speculation; and there's some collusion between Vauban and Morley. I'm sure there is, from what I caught at the bankers to-day. Scoundrels! But I've sharp eyes on their track.

(*Enter Dorothy.*)

Dorothy (*with bag of francs*). Here they are, darling, a bag of sin. I never knew how heavy sin is till now. Feel it. Take care to lose every *sou.*

Alston. Lose! If I must play, I shall play to win; that's the game our firm always plays.

Dorothy. But the horrible fascination of gambling.

Alston. Don't pay, I tell you, as an investment of time and capital.

Dorothy. But your poor conscience?

Alston. My conscience has a broad back; a conscience without a broad back would be no use in Birmingham.

Dorothy. You dear boy, may I really tell you what I feel—the *real* truth. I always feel so ashamed when I speak the real truth, and my face gets so dreadfully hot.

Alston. Then don't speak—whisper. (*She inclines her face towards him. He kisses her.*)

Dorothy. For shame, sir; it makes my face hotter than the truth! Oh! Edward, don't be angry with me. Somehow, I always liked wicked heroes from a child—the poor giants, not Jack. I always felt I should like to marry a wicked hero. I thought you couldn't be wicked, that you didn't know how; but I see that you could be wicked if you liked. It makes me so pleased and happy; it will be so delightful to keep you good. I have always pitied a woman with a thoroughly good husband. What a bore her life must be.

Alston. Always looking up to her husband, eh?

Dorothy. Horrid! Oh! it will be so nice for you to look up to me, for me to give you good advice, to lead you in the straight path. This is the mission of a wife; I hope I shall find strength for this all-important task.

Alston. And the husband?

Dorothy. A good wife's influence is the happy privilege of a husband. It will make me so proud. A husband potentially wicked through human depravity, but good through my own precept and example. Oh! Edward, feelings like these make a happy home and a pious household. You dear boy. (*Clasps his hands.*) Won't it be nice?

Alston. Deuced nice! You are the sweetest preacher I ever heard. I should not mind listening to half-a-dozen of the same sort.

Dorothy. Sermons, Edward?

Alston. Preachers, Dorothy!

Dorothy. One preacher of this kind is enough for any young man's conversion. (*Alston kisses her.*) For shame, Edward! I'll never preach to you again.

(*Miss Lindsay enters by centre doors.*)

Miss Lindsay. Now then, Dorothy; quarrelling as usual.

Dorothy. Oh, no, aunt, only giving Edward good advice.

Alston. Which, of course, I returned. It is always pleasant for the lips of man to return good advice; eh, Miss Lindsay?

Dorothy. Yes, sir; but one can have too much of a good thing.

Miss Lindsay. Never too much good advice, Dorothy. Now to our posts. (*To Alston*) You are going to that accursed Club; I hope only as a matter of precaution; I don't think Verney will play this evening.

Alston. Indeed!

Miss Lindsay. I have been talking to him.

Alston. Water on a duck's back!

Miss Lindsay. I have done bigger things than this, Edward Alston (*with solemnity*); I have been permitted to do bigger things than this. The old, tattered garments of a man's better life cling to him. I make no boast. I may have done nothing, but I think I have done something; I think he will return here this evening, and not go to the Club; a turning point in his wretched, despicable life, a turning point in hers; but I know nothing. My old adversary walks up and down this place; I can hear him now. He'll put his spoke in the wheel if he can, be sure of that. (*To Alston*) Go to the Club; you may have to fight him there, after all!

Dorothy (*to Miss Lindsay*). Shall you tell her?

Miss Lindsay. Not a word. The two must work it out together. I have laid the foundation—that's all. You have helped, Dorothy: you have done good work. The clasp of your hand and the kiss of your lips have been salvation to Geraldine. Once more to our posts.

Alston. That poor invalid! It's not contagious? (*To Miss Lindsay*) You are sure of that?

Miss Lindsay. Only rheumatic fever; but "only" is

bad enough—an agony of pain. We shall take it turn and turn about to-night. If it had been contagious I should not have taken Dorothy; but recollect, Edward Alston, that this girl who is going to be your wife comes of a family that has never flinched when duty or danger stood ahead. "*En avant*" is our motto, and it runs in our blood. I will follow you, Dorothy. I want that medicine, as soon as they will let us get into our rooms.

Dorothy. That door is open, aunt; you can go to your room through there (*points to door*). (*Exit Miss Lindsay by door Left.*) (*To Alston*) Don't be alarmed, Edward. I'm only a little coward, after all; I shall never run into danger. I love you too much, a great deal too much, I'm afraid.

Alston. Never mind being a coward in that particular.

Dorothy. Well, come along. You may go with me to the door of the invalid's room—that is, if you are quite steady, and don't give me any more good advice. (*They go up together.*)

Alston. Why, your aunt says you can't have too much. (*Kisses her.*)

Dorothy. You are very wicked! What a lot of sermons I shall be obliged to preach to you!

Alston. The more the better, from such persuasive lips. (*Exeunt by centre door.*)

(*Voice of Waiter in corridor.*) The key of your room, ma'am.

(*Voice of Miss Lindsay in her room.*) Thank you, leave it in the lock.

(*Mrs. Verney enters by centre door.*)

Mrs. Verney (*calling into corridor*). Waiter!

(*Thomas comes to centre door.*)

Mrs. Verney. Is Miss Lindsay in her room?

Thomas. Yes, ma'am.

Mrs. Verney. You gave her my letter?

Thomas. I placed it on her table half-an-hour ago.

Mrs. Verney. Thanks. That is all I wanted. (*Exit Thomas.*) I can't bear to be alone. She will stay with me. She will be with me when he comes. When he sees her, he will feel that all is right, and then I can explain everything. (*Miss Lindsay enters by centre door, a dressing-gown over her arm.*) Oh, you good creature, you have got my letter? You are going to spend the evening with me. It will be such a comfort and happiness.

Miss Lindsay. I'm afraid—

Mrs. Verney. Oh, but you must—indeed, you must! We could talk of old times; and then you could talk to me as you have so often talked. Those good words—would to heaven I had remembered them more!

Miss Lindsay. My dear, I have promised to nurse that poor Mrs. Fitzgerald for the night. Her maid is fairly knocked up, and she can't bear these foreign nurses dressed up like nuns—though there are true, good women amongst them, Papists as they are. I've learnt that, thank Heaven! since I came abroad.

Mrs. Verney. But still— Oh, if you only knew!

Miss Lindsay. Much as I should like to be with you, I don't think I ought to desert this poor invalid. Dorothy is not much of a nurse as yet; I'm teaching her. I could send her to sit with you for a time.

Mrs. Verney. No, not Dorothy—not Dorothy; much as I love her, she could do me no good. I feel you ought to go—it would be selfish to detain you; but mind, I have asked you to stay here with me this evening. Recollect that.

Miss Lindsay. Certainly. But why?

Mrs. Verney. Nothing. I must not keep you. Good-bye! Kiss me, and wish me good night.

Miss Lindsay. Good night! (*kisses Mrs. Verney*).

Have faith and true confidence, my child; prayers are heard, Geraldine! (*Knock at centre door.*)

Mrs. Verney (*starts*). (*Aside*) Can it be? Merciful Heaven! (*Opens door.*)

Thomas (*outside*). Miss Lindsay is wanted directly in Mrs. Fitzgerald's room.

Miss Lindsay. At once! Again, good night and good speed, Geraldine! (*Exit Miss Lindsay by centre door.*)

Mrs. Verney. I want help and support more than that invalid; but I could not bear to tell her the vile story with my own lips. Alone, I must fight out this terrible battle. If I can only save him! Oh, that revolting letter! Surely it must destroy the gambler's infatuation! He will come knocking impatiently at the door. He will enter: "Where, where is this man? That accursed letter—you dropped it at my feet!" Will he strike me down? kill me before I can speak? Men have killed women in their rage. But: "Why, there is no one here, Harry! Look, search!—search my room, every corner!" (*Throws open door of her room.*) "No one has been here. Ask—inquire. Ask Miss Lindsay; she will tell you I asked her to spend the evening here with me, in this room. Innocent! quite innocent! A falsehood, but for your sake!" This terrible ordeal, Heaven grant it may not be in vain! (*Listens.*) Footsteps! (*A low tap at the door.*) A knock—so soft! (*A low tap at the door.*) Again, so soft! This is more terrible than anger! (*Aloud*) Coming, coming! Let me nerve myself a moment. His safety, his salvation—let me only think of that! (*Aloud*) Coming, Harry! That thought, that hope, sustains me. I'm strong—quite strong. (*Goes to door, unlocks it, and throws it open.*) Come in, Harry! (*She comes down stage without looking at the person who enters. Morley enters, and follows her down.*) Well you're come—come—

Morley. Yes, Geraldine.

Mrs. Verney (*starts at his voice, turns to him with a scream*). You!

Morley. Yes. Why this surprise?

Mrs. Verney. You! You, the man whose miserable advances I have just rejected with contempt and scorn! You dare!

Morley. He will be away.

Mrs. Verney. Who will be away?

Morley. Your husband; you say he will be away.

Mrs. Verney. What do you mean? I never told you he would be away.

Morley. Your letter told me.

Mrs. Verney. Letter! What letter? Are you mad?

Morley (*showing her letter*). This letter!

Mrs. Verney. That letter! Oh, horror! how did that letter come into your hands?

Morley. It was directed to me! (*Shows envelope.*) Here's the direction plain enough.

Mrs. Verney. Opened? Had it been opened?

Morley. I think the envelope may have been tampered with.

Mrs. Verney. Then go — go this instant; he will come. Save yourself! save me!

Morley. Your husband is not at the Club; I have been there to find him.

Mrs. Verney. Of course not. He will be here directly. He knows all. Go! for Heaven's sake, go!

Morley. Don't be alarmed; if he does come, I have a valid excuse for coming here. Oh! Geraldine, this afternoon it was such a clever device, you utterly deceived me by your splendid indignation. I understood it all the moment I received this letter; a blind for that meddlesome Madame St. Preux. I never loved her; I only love you, Geraldine, my whole heart and soul.

Mrs. Verney. Love! The word is too vile!

Morley. Your own written words. There's the record. (*Shows letter.*) Have courage in the promptings of your heart. All is ready—a travelling carriage—Italy—a villa at Capri, that bright island made for love!

Mrs. Verney. Listen to me, Captain Morley. That letter was never meant for you; I wrote it for my husband's eyes alone; deliberately dropped it at his feet with my own hands, my last desperate effort to save him from this fatal madness, to drag him from that accursed Club to-night!

Morley. What! So you have compromised me without mercy, involved my credit without the slightest regard.

Mrs. Verney. Be generous. At least, I have told you the truth. Have mercy on a woman's despair.

Morley. Can I forget that you have played with my affections without scruple, lured me on with your false words, tortured me with your cruel smiles? No, Geraldine, in your own toils, in the web which you have woven—you are mine!

Mrs. Verney. Never!

Morley. When a man's love has been outraged, love becomes a thing of unflinching purpose. You must, you shall be mine!

Mrs. Verney. Never yours, I repeat, come what will. If my desperate game has failed, I must bear the shame, but in my own conscience I will be innocent! (*Knock at centre door.*) He's here! All is lost! He will kill you—kill me! Well, let the worst come quickly; this agony is too great for endurance! (*Knock is repeated.*)

Morley. I will conceal myself in your room.

Mrs. Verney. No, no; openly. Let him see us openly. I insist!

Morley. In your room, I say. Give him this packet.

(*Gives her small packet.*) Have no fear, Geraldine, we shall be quite safe, I pledge my word. (*Morley persists in going into room, right. He closes the door.*)

Mrs. Verney. This pain at my heart — what's it mean? Oh, Miss Lindsay, you could have saved me if you had remained! (*Knock repeated.*) No help; life or death, he must come! (*Aloud*) Coming, Harry, coming! (*She staggers up to centre door and opens it. Verney enters; she staggers down stage.*)

Verney. Where were you, Geraldine?

Mrs. Verney. In my room. (*Suddenly*) No, not in my room; I mean, I was asleep.

Verney. You look dazed enough. Come, sit down, I want to talk; no time to lose. (*He makes her sit. He stands, walking to and fro at intervals.*) Someone whispered in my ear to-day that you were tired of this false, hollow life we have been leading; that you had a true heart, if I only knew how to touch it; that I might win heart and love if I really tried. Is this true, Geraldine?

Mrs. Verney (*aside*). Ah, subtle cruelty; after reading that letter.

Verney. Answer me, Geraldine; is it so?

Mrs. Verney. I have no answer.

Verney. Listen to me. I have lost heavily; the cursed fever is in my veins! Sometimes the hope, nay the certainty of gain, stares me in the face; I clutch the gold; every figure, every calculation points to fortune, and then I feel mad to play; and then comes, I know not how, a cold shiver of doubt; the figures go wrong—the horrible fatality of some latent, uncalculated chance —ruin! Then come touches of remorse. If someone could seize me at that moment—could cry to me with vehement words, "Come, leave it all alone; fly from the accursed thing; fly from this accursed place; fly— (*Mrs. Verney starts up*).

Mrs. Verney. What, real?—true?

Verney. Now!

Mrs. Verney (*flies into his arms*). Harry—husband! (*In a moment she falls back from him uttering a sharp cry of anguish.*)

Verney. Now, I mean it. Perhaps from this night forth a better life.

Mrs. Verney. To-night?

Verney. The mail train to Genoa; an hour to pack.

Mrs. Verney. Not to-night. Impossible! I have no maid.

Verney. I will help to pack. Come along. (*Goes towards room, right.*)

Mrs. Verney. No, not to-night—indeed, I can't.

Verney. Let's try. (*She stops him.*)

Mrs. Verney. I can't go this evening—indeed, I can't. A sudden journey at this hour—

Verney. Won't, hey?

Mrs. Verney. No, can't—indeed, I can't.

Verney. I say Yes. I'm a splendid hand at rapid packing. Call in that French girl to help you. Quick! Not a minute to lose!

Mrs Verney (*in despair*). One moment, Harry. I'd forgotten; I have a message for you from Captain Morley.

Verney. Has he been here this evening?

Mrs. Verney. Yes. He left this packet for you.

Verney. A packet! Give it to me.

Mrs. Verney. Here it is. (*Gives packet.*) You were not at the Club; he left it here for you.

Verney (*tears open packet*). Eh, notes, notes! (*Counts.*) Gad! the touch of the money. The fever returns, Geraldine. So you won't go?—won't go—

Mrs. Verney (*aside*). Miserable wretch that I am—lost before my very eyes!

(*Voice of Thomas without*). If you please, sir, the Chevalier Vauban.

Mrs. Verney (*flies to Verney*). Don't receive this man, for Heaven's sake!

Verney. He must come in, I suppose—common civility. (*Aloud to Thomas*) Admit the Chevalier. (*Mrs. Verney draws away from her husband.*) (*Vauban enters by centre doors.*) (*He bows in a stately way to Mrs. Verney, and then he addresses Verney in a tone of badinage.*)

Vauban. Well, Verney. I waited dinner for you; a good dinner, but a dinner of careful purpose; a dinner to give strength and confidence, not a reckless feast. Wine specially chosen, just enough to stimulate the brain without clouding the intellect. I flatter myself such a dinner belongs to the fine arts.

Verney. You see, I'm not dead sure of the figures yet--

Vauban. Ah, a hungry stomach; it fills the head with doubt and indecision.

Verney. I shall not play this evening.

Vauban. Certainly not. I would not have you play—not even a single stake.

Verney. It's those calculations, I tell you. I'm not sure—

Vauban. You cannot shake my confidence; I have dined effectively, so my mind is at peace—not worried by what you call the "inner man."

Verney. After all, are you wise to play? Let's wait; let's run it through again.

Vauban. I shall play; you shall *not* play; I shall win; you shall not win. I am sorry, for it will be a great *coup*. But I intrude on Madame at this hour; I pray pardon.

Verney. No, no, Vauban, not at all, I assure you.

Vauban. I must return; they are all waiting. *C'est*

dommage, mais— I really would not have you play to-night. Some other day, if the figures prove correct, and I win a fortune.

Verney. I'm deuced sorry, but somehow I seem to have lost all nerve for the time.

Vauban. Ah, that "inner man" without his dinner; he's a sad coward. Well, *bon soir;* I shall do the best I can, but remember always, I shall play at a disadvantage to-night. I must make all the calculations for myself; no living person understands our scheme; only you and I; I cannot ask help from another.

Verney. Gad! as far as that goes, I could keep the calculations.

Vauban. Thank you, my friend. But you must not; you would be sure to play yourself.

Verney. Not a bit of it.

Vauban. When fortune began to smile, I would not trust you. Nay, you shall not go!

Verney. I am not such a weak fool as that. Besides, I owe you my help.

Vauban. Non, définitivement, non. Some other time, but not to-night.

Verney. To-night I say. Come, Vauban, let's be off.

Mrs. Verney. No, Harry, for Heaven's sake!

Verney. I'm determined to go.

Mrs. Verney (*suddenly clasping Verney's arm*). Are you mad? Can't you see it's all a lure—an excuse to get you to that accursed place and rob you of every penny!

Vauban. Madame! (*Bows low in deprecatory manner.*)

Verney. Geraldine, this language is unjustifiable.

Vauban. I have the misfortune to have incurred Madame's dislike; but to be accused of crime—it is hard to bear for a man of honour. (*Lays his hand on his breast.*)

Mrs. Verney (*with contempt*). Honour!

Vauban (*significantly*). There is the honour of a man, Madame, and there is the honour of a woman. (*She flinches.*) I must leave this room.

Verney. I go with you—some reparation, some declaration of confidence—

Mrs. Verney (*to Verney*). Don't go, for Heaven's sake!—not with that man—not to that hell!

Vauban (*with significance*). Captain Morley, by the way (*Mrs. Verney shrinks from Verney*), have you seen him this evening, Verney? He promised to see me, but he is so devoted to the society of ladies—

Verney. I have not seen him. He left this packet for me. Come, Vauban, at once. (*Verney goes up to centre door. Mrs. Verney is about to follow him, but her movement is intercepted by Vauban, who points significantly to door, right. Verney goes out into corridor.*)

Vauban (*to Mrs. Verney*). The honour of a woman, Madame. (*She quails away from him.*)

Verney (*without*). Come along, Vauban, *avanti!*

Vauban. Coming, *mon ami*. (*Goes up to centre door.*) (*Aside*) Fast bound—the gossamer threads! (*Exit by centre door, which he closes on going out.*)

Mrs. Verney. Lost, lost! and I could not save him! Coward—miserable coward that I am, I could not endure that this shame should be revealed to the eyes of that relentless fiend. But perhaps it's not too late. I will go to that Club, and drag him away at all costs!

Morley (*enters from room, right*). Geraldine!

Mrs. Verney (*dazed*). I'm going—going to that Club.

Morley. What for?

Mrs. Verney. What for? To save him!

Morley. Useless, I tell you.

Mrs. Verney. Useless or not, I go.

Morley. Be reasonable—one minute; I *must* speak to you.

Mrs. Verney. Not a moment to be lost.

Morley. One moment, I *insist.* I make no threat, but I hold your letter—your compromising letter.

Mrs. Verney. You can ruin me, be it so, but I will save him!

Morley. Have patience, Geraldine. Here's the letter. (*Offers her letter*) Take it. (*Gives her the letter.*)

Mrs. Verney (*astonished*). What?

Morley. Destroy it. Heaven forbid that I should take advantage of such a letter!

Mrs. Verney (*crushes letter away, and hides it in her bosom*). This is generous—very generous. (*Turns to him*) I can trust you with my whole soul. Oh! help me to save him; be my true, noble friend; chivalry is still alive.

Morley. Is he worthy of this devotion?

Mrs. Verney. He is my husband.

Morley. Your husband; but—

Mrs. Verney. But what? Speak! speak!

Morley. That envelope was opened when I received it. Do you understand?

Mrs. Verney. And—and, oh Heaven! I begin to understand. No, not this awful shame. What! he gave you that letter? and then that money—that money which you gave me. What! with my own hands?—that money—the price of my degradation—you—yours! Sold for a price? And then he left me—my husband, alone—in this room, *our* room, with— Oh, unutterable shame!

Morley. Nay, Geraldine, it so fell out, but that was an accident—a chance accident Believe me, I love you—my whole life—every day—every hour!

Mrs. Verney. Love me! Your whole life! No; one

month of your life dedicated to this infamy. Love me! Your own chattel—bought with your own gold. Love! Why, the word burns like molten iron; it blisters my lips. Love! Oh, loathsome spectre, which stalks up and down the world, rendering men and women vile. Back to your kennel, you miserable hound, and leave me alone to endure this awful burden of shame and self-contempt! Go, I say; your presence pollutes the very air!

Morley. Bitter, unjust words, but I obey. (*He goes to centre door, opens it, and looks down corridor.*)

Mrs. Verney. Why do you linger? Go, I tell you.

Morley (*closes door and comes down*). I cannot go.

Mrs. Verney. Why?

Morley. People in the passage. Listen! (*Confused voices in passage.*)

Mrs. Verney. Go, I repeat!

Morley. Impossible! I must consider your reputation.

Mrs. Verney. My reputation in your miserable hands!

(*Voice of St. Preux in passage*) *Le Capitaine Morley, il est ici, je suis sûre; c'est un scandale.*

Mrs. Verney. That woman's voice! Have you done this? Have you boasted of this letter to that woman? Is this another link in your accursed chain to drag me to perdition?

Morley. No, on my sacred honour, no. That man Vauban—he must have seen the letter; you must have provoked his vengeance.

St. Preux (*outside*). *Le Capitaine Morley! Ouvrez la porte, c'est mon amant; c'est une infamie.* (*Knocking at door.*)

Morley. You must open the door and confront that woman.

Mrs. Verney. But you?

Morley. I shall conceal myself.

Mrs. Verney. But she will search my room.

Morley. Refuse her permission—be firm ; there is no alternative. (*Morley goes up to room, right, on threshold.*) (*Aside*) Mine now. Compromised beyond redemption. I have won the prize at last. (*Closes door.*)

St. Preux (*outside*). *Ouvrez donc—ouvrez, J'insiste.* (*Knocking outside.*)

Mrs. Verney. I am coming—coming ! (*She goes up stage, staggers, and falls down in a swoon.*) (*Miss Lindsay emerges from portière, left. She looks for a moment at Mrs. Verney, then passes to door, right. She opens it, and beckons Morley out.*)

Miss Lindsay. Hush ! Make no noise. You are to go away—through my room.

Morley. Madame, this intrusion—

Miss Lindsay. Hush, I say ; you will be heard in the passage.

Morley. I decline to go. This is no business of yours !

Miss Lindsay. It is my business, and you will go, because I mean you to go. Obey quietly. You are a scoundrel, that's past praying for ; but surely people need not say that you are a fool, outwitted by an old woman ! Be wise in time, come. (*She leads him to door, left, forces him behind portière. She thrusts a tract behind the portière,* "Ginger Nuts; or, Hot in the Mouth." *She returns, looking for a moment at Mrs. Verney, and enters room, right.*) (*Knocking and renewed cries outside door,* "*Ouvrez ! ouvrez !*")

(*Mrs. Verney recovers from swoon, struggles to her feet, staggers mechanically to door, centre, throws it open, and comes short distance down stage. St. Preux, Frager, Sass, Thomas, maids, etc., appear on threshold.*)

Mrs. Verney (*turning upon them, and clinging for support to a chair*). What is the meaning of this intrusion—this unwarrantable intrusion ?

St. Preux (*comes down, followed by the others*). Captain Morley — where is he? Answer me, madame! (*Mrs. Verney sinks helplessly into a chair.*) Your lover— where is he?

Frager. Where is he? Your English respectability, madam; I blush for you!

St. Preux. We shall find him, *tout de suite.* (*She passes on to door, right. Knocks.*) Captain Morley— Captain Morley, I say.

Miss Lindsay (*opens the door, and appears with a glass of water and a bottle of sal volatile*). Well, what is all this disturbance? Mrs. Verney is not very well this evening, but she does not require an army of nurses. I have been getting her some sal volatile.

Sass. Sal volatile! (*To St. Preux*) *Mais c'est une bêtise, Madame, avec votre Capitaine Morley. Voyons! sal volatile, voilà tout!*

CURTAIN.

ACT IV.

MRS. VERNEY'S *apartments, as in* ACT III. *Before the rising of the curtain the band plays the air, "La Donna è Mobile."* MRS. VERNEY *and* MISS LINDSAY *discovered.* MRS. VERNEY *is on the sofa, her head reclining on* MISS LINDSAY'S *bosom.*)

Miss Lindsay. You are better now, Geraldine?

Mrs. Verney. Much better, lying in this haven of rest and safety, lulled by the beating of a true heart. (*Rises from recumbent position.*) Oh, you good ministering angel of mercy. Saved from that awful shame by your watchfulness; saved from the triumph of that Frenchwoman's relentless eyes; saved from open shame before the cruel world!

Miss Lindsay. Try to sleep awhile.

Mrs. Verney. Where?

Miss Lindsay. Your room.

Mrs. Verney (*rises*). His room! Never more will I enter his room.

Miss Lindsay. My child—

Mrs. Verney. Don't ask me to do that. I will try to do what good I can for him, but I am not his wife now. Sold by him for gold! The bond is broken between us. Oh! the racking sense of pain and degradation which gnaws my heart. Not near him, I say—not his room! My whole frame creeps and shivers at the revolting thought. Once more we shall meet—once for all. He shall hear from my lips the bitter anguish of my soul, and then strangers for evermore! Oh! don't ask me—

Miss Lindsay. I don't ask you, Geraldine.

Mrs. Verney. But I do ask you for protection, and countenance, and support.

Miss Lindsay. They are yours, to the best of my power. There is a second bed in Dorothy's room: you shall sleep there.

Mrs. Verney. Dorothy's room! I know what you mean by that. Oh! you good, true friend; be it so, but not to sleep.

Miss Lindsay. Come, then. Edward Alston—I've sent him to that heli to watch how things go!

Mrs. Verney. For my sake, you have sent Dorothy's future husband to that hell!

Miss Lindsay. I would have gone there myself if I could have done any good. He's a shrewd, God-serving young man. Business habits, as sharp as a needle.

Mrs. Verney. But if he plays—his principles—

Miss Lindsay. I never trust to principles. Half the time they won't stand even a hard day's wash, like your rascally calicoes, made of mildew and lies. But he looks

for sure profits. It isn't worth his while to gamble. He can make a deal more out of brass. Come along, I shall watch over you, and over him, Geraldine, for *he is* your husband, unworthy though he be. And, remember, *Another* watches over us all, so try to rest awhile in peace. Come, poor child—my Geraldine of the old days—back with me to the old, quiet, sober life. Have faith and hope. (*Miss Lindsay blows out candles on table, and, taking her own candle, leads out Mrs. Verney by door, left. After a pause, Verney enters by centre doors, followed by Thomas, who lights the candles on the table. Verney hums during this entrance the air, "La Donna è Mobile."*

Thomas. Do you require anything else, sir?

Verney. No, thanks. Gad! Thomas, glorious luck; hit it this time. I shall remember you to-morrow.

Thomas. Glad to hear it, sir. Thank you. Good night, sir.

Verney. Ah! good night. Get to sleep, eh? Sleep after a good day's work; sleep—

Thomas. Yes, sir, I hope so. (*Exit Thomas, closing centre doors.*) (*Verney hums air, ascertains that doors are closed, goes to travelling desk on small table, opens it, takes out small revolver and cartridges, comes down, sits at large table, begins to load revolver, then lays down revolver and goes towards door, right.*)

Verney. Asleep—fast asleep—and you could have saved me, Geraldine! The smile of my good angel had touched my heart, but your frown destroyed its power; you could have led me forth from this accursed den of thieves! One great chance was given you to save a man from perdition. Love! Nay, one spark of common feeling would have saved me—would have saved us both! And you threw away the chance. Henceforth, perdition to other men who meet your eyes—perdition to yourself! Sleep on. When you awake I shall be

asleep. (*Hums air, and returns to table and sits.*) Ruined, penniless, a beggar! I can't bear it; it drives me mad to think of it—what might have been, when I began life—wretched fool, what might have been! I must get it out of my head as soon as I can, forget it—forget it, somehow. Sleep! I can't sleep. Sleep, the long sleep, the deep sleep, the unwaking sleep—anything to give me rest and peace. (*Hums air, and continues loading revolver as he hums air.*) (*Mrs. Verney enters from room, left.*)

Mrs. Verney (*on threshold*). Harry Verney! (*He starts, and conceals revolver in his breast. Mrs. Verney comes down.*)

Verney. Ah! what, awake? Come, it's all right—all right. A big fortune, I tell you. Success at last—victory! Go to bed, sleep on it; I'm tired now; you shall know all about it to-morrow—everything!

Mrs. Verney. I know it now—that pistol concealed in your breast—those cartridges on the table. I have stopped you in a crime—a mean, cowardly crime—afraid to live! I should have thought, afraid to die!

Verney. Ruin—utter ruin!

Mrs. Verney. He talks of ruin. What's ruin? Ruin can be repaired, but shame—both plunged in abysmal depths of shame. For myself, I have not been a good wife; for you, you have not been a good husband; but— Why, the whole conscience of the world revolts at the thought of a woman being sold for gold—not a slave master, that's bad enough, but a husband, sworn to cherish and protect. Oh, Harry Verney, with my own hands, I paid you the price of my dishonour.

Verney. What do you mean? I'm half dazed.

Mrs. Verney. And you took it, the vile gold; and you knew that that man—oh, revolting thought—and you turned away, and you left me alone with that man, with

dishonour and shame. Is this a time to seek death? Live, and repent of this terrible wrong.

Verney. Again, what do you mean? Speak plain, for Heaven's sake!

Mrs. Verney. Again, and for the last time, that letter —you read that letter.

Verney. What letter?

Mrs. Verney. That letter to Captain Morley. I dropped it at your feet; you took it up.

Verney. When?

Mrs. Verney. When! No lying subterfuge. This afternoon, when we parted; that letter written to Captain Morley, but meant for your eyes alone; you gave it, or let it be given to him; the very contract of your infernal bargain!

Verney. I never read any letter. I remember now, you did drop a letter as you were going out. Ah, yes, I took it up. Yes, and Vauban came in. The burning infatuation of that accursed scheme. I suppose I must have dropped it. The whole thing escaped from my mind—a blank till now. What was in the letter?

Mrs. Verney. I had stooped very low to save you. (*Miss Lindsay enters door, left, and stands on threshold.*) It was an assent to an assignation—an assignation that had never been made—my last desperate hope of luring you away from that fearful hell!

Verney. On my honour, I never read that letter. Someone must have picked it up and given it to Morley. The money that Morley gave you, he had raised on securities that I had entrusted to him.

Mrs. Verney. Is this true? Oh, look me in the eyes and tell me it is true.

Verney. Miss Lindsay had talked earnestly to me about you, about myself, a short time after you had thrown down that very letter. Ask her whether she ha

not touched some redeeming chord in my despicable life? (*Miss Lindsay comes down.*)

Miss Lindsay. You may believe him, Geraldine. At the time I talked to him, I am sure he had never read that letter—never had the slightest suspicion of its contents—of its existence. (*Miss Lindsay retires up stage.*)

Mrs. Verney (*passionately*). Harry, husband, take me in your arms. Yours once more, heart to heart; the hideous thought of that shame has fled away. Oh, back from the thick darkness to the blessed light of faith and hope.

Verney. Hope! A ruined gamester!

Mrs. Verney. We are ruined, be it so. My fault as well as yours—a folly—a crime; but not that shame, not that unutterable degradation. Oh! Harry, I promise you the devotion of my life; it shall be a better life. I will work, slave for you—not in the brightness and glamour of life—I was faithless then, but through bitter trial and deep anguish, do I swear to be your true and loving wife.

Verney. I have been a weak, miserable fool, sacrificing every good thing for that phantom of social success. I am desperately unworthy of all goodness and all love.

Mrs. Verney. We are both unworthy, but what matter if the deep chord of true love, somehow, anyhow, be struck at last. I will answer for myself, because I love you *now*—love for the first time, in all its strength and power.

Verney (*embraces her*). Geraldine, my wife at last.

Mrs. Verney. At last! Late, but at last. Not in the hour of the marriage service, but in this hour of sore trial, sorrow's benediction on our brows. Let us face it bravely; let us forget the past and all its loss, and all its woe; let us begin this new life by declaring that we have

married upon nothing; a folly, maybe, but not a crime; hundreds have done well upon nothing; be sure we shall do very well.

Verney. My wife!

Mrs. Verney. Your *new* wife, Geraldine. (*To Miss Lindsay*) Oh, Miss Lindsay, can you trust me?

Miss Lindsay. I *can* trust you, Geraldine; I can trust you both.

(*Dorothy enters suddenly by door, left, and hurries up to Miss Lindsay.*)

Dorothy. Oh, aunt, Edward—*gendarmes*—what's to be done? (*Centre doors are opened. Alston appears between two gendarmes.*)

Dorothy (*flies to Alston*). Edward, dear, what's the matter?

Alston. Don't be alarmed; I've only knocked down one scoundrel; I couldn't help it. It was a stupid thing to do. These polite gentlemen have allowed me to refer them to Monsieur Sass. Till he can be found, they have permitted me to come to Mr. Verney's room on the plea of urgent business. (*To Verney*) I was present at the tables to-night, Mr. Verney. So far as I could judge, for they tried politely to hustle me from your table, the play was fair enough, and your scheme was a capital scheme, only there was one fatal factor in the calculations which you had unfortunately overlooked.

Verney. Accursed mischance, it ruined us both!

Alston. It ruined you.

Verney. And Vauban also.

Alston. Will nothing open your eyes? Vauban lost his pretended money, and your *real* money, to his own accomplices.

Verney. Can it be? Are you really sure?

Alston. Quite sure. Vauban is a great master in his art; he has ruined many in his pleasant, guileless way

a distinctly clever man, Vauban. Honesty would have made him a millionaire.

Mrs. Verney. But cheated! Is there no remedy?

(*Sass enters.*)

Alston. As regards the play, there was no open cheating. What's gone, is gone - the hard cash, I mean. But still something may be saved. I don't think, with the evidence I have just procured, that Captain Morley will claim payment of those I O U's in a court of justice —when it can be proved, as I shall be able to prove it, that he is the accomplice of Vauban.

Mrs. Verney. Is it possible?

Sass. C'est vrai, madame.

Alston. More than that; the lion's provider of that arch scoundrel, and the participator in his accursed gains Eh, Monsieur Sass?

Sass. Assurément, you have burst ze bubble, Monsieur Alston. Monte Carlo shall be too hot for zees *frippons voleurs*. Ze Englishman shall only play at ze *établissement*, loss with honour—loss with honesty. (*To gendarmes*) *Allez donc!* (*Gendarmes go out.*)

Verney (*clasping Alston's hands*). A thousand thanks, my true, good friend.

Mrs. Verney (*to Alston*). Thank you, Mr. Alston, for all you have done.

Alston. It's what I hope to do.

Mrs. Verney. But Captain Morley—when one thinks of the position he once held in London Society—how terrible the fall!

Alston. Well, trust us at Birmingham for knowing base metal when we see it. (*To Verney*) Leave the affair in my hands, I've still more to learn; I shall see you in the morning.

Dorothy (*to Alston*). Oh, you dear, good boy, to think that you should really be a real hero. How nice

of you to knock a man down. I am so pleased, so proud; and then just to think that all this time I should have fancied you were only a very good, religious young man. Why, you are fifty times better than that.

Miss Lindsay. Good all round, Dorothy; you are a lucky girl.

Dorothy. I know I am. Oh, aunt, to be able to fight like that. What a darling! (*To Alston*) But the five hundred francs?

Alston. Lost! The scoundrel I knocked down—

Dorothy. Was it Vauban?

Alston. No. Vaubans are seldom punished by man.

Dorothy. The cold pudding is quite gone.

Alston. And the *real* truth, Dorothy?

Dorothy. Never, except to you.

Miss Lindsay. Well, my work's done at Monte Carlo. The invalid's friends have come out from England. (*To Alston*) Edward Alston, to-morrow we start for Rome. Ten thousand tracts in my trunk—heavy guns.

Mrs. Verney (*to Miss Lindsay*). And we start for home—a *new* home which your faithfulness has rendered possible for us.

Sass. Ah, home! I know. "Home comforts." Huntley Palmer! Peek Freen! Monsieur Alston (*looking towards Alston.*) Ze best brass, *parole d'honneur!*

CURTAIN.

VITTORIA CONTARINI:

A STORY OF VENICE.

IN FIVE ACTS AND SEVEN TABLEAUX.

CHARACTERS.

BARON FALKENBURG, Head of the Austrian Police in Venice.
MAXIMILIAN VON STETTENHEIM, Colonel, Third Regiment of Croats.
COUNT PLATTEN, Lieutenant in same Regiment.
COUNT GRIMANI, } Venetian Noblemen.
COUNT CONTARINI, }
MARCO CONTARINI, Son of Count Contarini.
PIETRO, Servant of Count Contarini.
VITTORIA CONTARINI, Daughter of Count Contarini, Betrothed to Count Grimani.
POLICE AGENT.
JAILOR.
Austrian Officers, Soldiers, Venetian Populace.

Scene, VENICE. Action commences shortly before the Battle of Custozza (1866).

Act. I. Tableau 1.—The Challenge.
Act II. Tableau 2.—The Franciscan sets his own Trap.
Tableau 3.—The Café Singer.
Act III. Tableau 4.—The Spy's Stratagem.
Act IV. Tableau 5.—Grimani forgets Venice.
Tableau 6.—Vittoria's Triumph.
Act V. Tableau 7.—The Bridge of Sighs.

ACT I.—TABLEAU I.

THE CHALLENGE.

SCENE. *Magnificent but dilapidated chamber in the Palazzo Contarini. At back, large window and balcony overlooking Grand Canal, with distant view of canal, Venetian buildings, etc. The room is entered by two doors, right and left. Right door, grand entrance to room. Left door, entrance to Vittoria's apartments. On left wall, near window, picture of Virgin with small shrine. Lamp. Prie-dieu chair. The room is furnished in the old Venetian style.*

PIETRO *discovered sounding panels of wall, and singing from time to time snatches of Italian National Song.*

Pietro. If I could but find it—that fox's hole; and then one fine day I should trap the fox, and *then* ten thousand florins! Why, Pietro, Pietro, with ten thousand florins you would be a gentleman at large, bless the saints! and not one soul the wiser for your day's work. Ah! (*sounds panel*). Ten thousand florins for the body of Count Grimani, dead or alive. I'm sure to gain it sooner or later, for my trap is baited with the lady of his love, that proud Signorina, my mistress Vittoria; not that she loves him—she draws him here, as the steam and bubble of the cook's-shop draw me. We poor devils of men are the puppets of love or hunger.

(*Count Contarini outside trying to open door, right.*)

Count (*outside*). Open the door, Pietro!

Pietro. Why, plague on it—the lock was mended yesterday!

Contarini (*outside*). Quick, Pietro! Quick!

Pietro. The old fool. He's always fumbling with the locks. (*Goes to door, opens it. Enter Contarini.*)

Contarini (*with affected anger*). That locksmith is a rascal! a fool! a blundering idiot!

Pietro. A thousand pardons, Signor; I can open it easily enough.

Contarini. Yes, from the inside; it's from the outside that it sticks. Let it be mended. Do you hear?

Pietro. Yes, Signor. (*Pietro bows. Contarini passes on to centre of room. Pietro examining lock.*) It's not the lock—it's only a pretext for closing the door against me. (*Hums National air.*)

Contarini. Curse that tongue of yours, Pietro, we shall have the Austrians down upon us in a minute.

Pietro. A million pardons, Signor; it's so hard not to sing with the love of poor Venice at the bottom of one's heart.

Contarini. It will be harder singing in an Austrian dungeon, you fool. Now be off! you can't mend that lock by staring at it.

Pietro (*aside*). A cunning dog, my master. But I'm more cunning still. (*Exit.*)

Contarini (*comes down, thrusts nail into lock*). Ah, ah! Pietro, my man, for all your professions of patriotism, I would not trust you further than I can see.

Enter Grimani from secret panel.

Grimani. You are right. Pietro is a traitor.

Contarini. Ah, Grimani! (*they shake hands*). Pietro a traitor! have you proof?

Grimani. Plenty of proof! my Austrian friends af-

ford me that. Besides, the fool forgets that walls have ears. He could not even keep his counsel to himself.

Contarini. I'll turn the scoundrel out of doors this instant.

Grimani. Not so, my friend, to keep a spy on the premises is the best way of keeping those cursed Austrians from our doors. Don't be alarmed, I'll keep my eyes on Pietro.

Contarini. I always tremble when you enter this house.

Grimani. Well! it certainly is at the risk of my life. Indeed, I never feel quite safe unless I'm literally under the very nose of Falkenburg himself. The fool! how utterly he trusts me—how easily I worm out his secrets.

Contarini. I fear you are too confident, Grimani. Beware lest one day he make a fool of you.

Grimani. I tell you, Falkenburg has the firmest faith in his spy, the Franciscan friar, Father Onofrio, *your* obedient servant Count Grimani, head of the Secret Society of Venice. But to my errand here—Contarini, the day that you and I have longed for through these dark years of oppression and despair has dawned at last. Austria is straitened for men. Every nerve is being strained to meet the army of Victor Emmanuel before Custozza. The garrison here in Venice is reduced to well-nigh a handful of their worst troops—Croats, and such like scum. We are in secret communication with the Italian Government. The fleet of Italy is cruising off Malamocco, Cialdini is advancing by forced marches on Rovigo.

Contarini. Oh, my friend! Vittoria should hear those words of hope!

Grimani. In good time, Contarini. Women have their value—but not as conspirators

Contarini. Vittoria is my daughter, and hatred of the Austrian runs in her blood.

Grimani. Aye, the greater danger lest her feelings should betray us. In Venice, emotion itself is a traitor. Well, well, she shall know the truth later; but not now. Contarini, at last we may dare to strike a blow for freedom. The Secret Society has commanded all true Venetian men to hold themselves in readiness—an insurrection is impending. One fight, and the flag of Italy waves over the Piazza of St. Mark!

Contarini. An insurrection! but—

Grimani (*with vehemence*). But! but if we die, that flag waves over our dead bodies. Venice is free, and we are avenged! (*Vittoria enters left.*) Ah, my dearest! (*To Contarini*) Not a word to her! (*Advances to meet Vittoria.*) One kiss!

Vittoria. No, Count Grimani. (*Waves him back.*) Not now. (*Crosses to centre.*)

Grimani. Why so cold?

Vittoria. Cold! my face burns with shame; and my lips—oh, vile thought!

Contarini. Vittoria, you have sworn to keep that outrage a secret.

Vittoria. From my brother Marco! not from this man, my affianced husband—the guardian of my honour. Count Grimani, a few words will tell the story of the vile insult to which I have been exposed. I had gone to St. Mark's last evening—

Contarini. It was against my will.

Vittoria. I know I was wrong; but it was the anniversary of Daniel Manin's death, far away in Paris—it seemed so ungrateful not to utter one prayer for the love of his soul, who endured so much for the love of Venice. I was returning with Marietta to the gondola; we were suddenly surrounded by a crowd of Austrian officers

reeling from the Café Quadri. One of these men seized me by the arm—tore aside my veil. I strove to free myself from his grasp—

Grimani. I know the story.

Vittoria. You know it!

Grimani. I know all things that occur in Venice. He kissed you. (*Vittoria clasps her hands over her face.*)

Vittoria. Do you know this man's name?

Grimani. I do. Maximilian von Stettenheim, Colonel of the third Regiment of Croats.

Vittoria. You tell me this man's name—can you tell me that the insult is avenged?

Grimani. I cannot.

Vittoria (*with contempt*). You cannot! And you are my affianced husband.

Grimani. Yes, but with a price on my head.

Vittoria. I know that; but why so little moved by what concerns your honour as well as mine?

Grimani. Not empty words which weaken resolution, but deeds when the hour comes. Do you think that freak of yours last evening cost me nothing? Though you knew it not, I was close at hand when that man laid his cursed hands on you—kissed your lips. I could have struck him down dead at my feet, but I had to stand like a thing of stone and behold the outrage, for I have sworn that fearful oath, "Before all things," ay, flesh and blood, "Venice." I should have been arrested, the head of the Secret Society captured—shot for the sake of a woman; I have sworn only to die for the freedom of Venice. But patience, you shall be avenged in good time. I dare not strike openly, but I will strike, and that Austrian dog shall bite the dust.

Vittoria. I understand—the dagger! No, Count Grimani, better the insult remain unavenged than that the name of Vittoria Contarini be linked with a new disgrace.

Grimani. Oh! woman, give me justice. Have I a sword to use? I was a soldier in '48. I received my baptism of fire from the Austrian batteries at Novara. The cross of honour from the hands of Daniel Manin. Be just, I say. What weapon have those cursed Austrians left me but the knife? The coward's tool! I, a soldier of Italy, lie and skulk a spy in the Austrian quarters. I accept the shame, Vittoria; I endure it for the love of Venice.

Vittoria. The love of Venice! Oh, save her from the stain of blood! The day of her freedom will come. Let her be spotless in that day of triumph.

Grimani. Ay, the building will be fair to look on; but the hands of the workmen who raised it must needs be soiled in the work. First rubble, then the fair, white marble.

Pietro (*outside the door*). Open the door, Signor, open the door.

Contarini. Open it yourself, you fool. You said the lock was mended.

Pietro (*outside door*). Open, Signor—pray open.

(*Grimani withdraws by secret panel.*)

Contarini (*goes to door, opens it. Pietro enters*). You see it *does* stick on the outside, Pietro.

Pietro. Oh, Signor, there's something wrong. Count Platten of the Third Regiment of Croats waits below. (*Gives card.*)

Contarini. Count Platten! What's the meaning of this?

Pietro. He desires to see you.

Contarini. To see me! Impossible! An Austrian officer—there's no help for it. Announce him. (*Exit Pietro.*)

Vittoria. You must not see this man; I will meet him. Make some excuse for your absence. He cannot

harm me, but perhaps they come to arrest you. Oh, do listen to my entreaties. There's the panel passage; conceal yourself; I insist on it. If you love me, do as I wish. (*Drags her father, who is very reluctant, to panel, forces him in. Marco enters suddenly from her apartments, left.*) Marco, dearest, do not come here now. Back, back to my room. The Austrians are in the house—do not show yourself—they cannot harm me. Count Platten comes—

Marco. Count Platten, I expected him.

Vittoria. You expected him, Marco.

Marco. Yes, sweet sister; you must leave us. I have business with this man.

(*Pietro enters, announces Count Platten. Exit Pietro. Platten and Marco bow with marked ceremony.*)

Platten. Have I the honour of addressing Count Marco Contarini?

Marco. Your obedient servant. (*Platten bows to Vittoria, who returns his bow with studied coldness.*) The Countess Vittoria Contarini, Count Platten. This gentleman will excuse your presence, Vittoria.

Platten (*with marked politeness*). I pray you, Madam, do not let my presence drive you away, one moment will suffice for my business with Count Marco. (*Aside to Marco*) I have waited on you to inquire the name of your second.

Marco. Count Salvetti.

Platten. We propose to-morrow at day-break.

Marco. Count Salvetti will arrange all the preliminaries. I am now in his hands.

(*Vittoria retires apart, but still lingers in the room.*)

Platten. I have the honour to wish you good morning. (*Platten and Marco bow. Platten bows to Vittoria. Marco conducts Platten to door. Platten retires. Vittoria flies to Marco, clasping her hands.*)

Vittoria. Marco — Marco! what does this mean? For mercy tell me!

Marco. Sweet sister, I have avenged that insult.

Vittoria. Marco!

Marco. I laid my cane across the lips of that man and drew blood.

Vittoria. Rashness – madness!

Marco. Madness! Are you not my sister!

Vittoria. Count Platten's visit—it was a challenge.

Marco. It was—

Vittoria. Oh, Marco, I thought to keep this insult a secret from you. How did you learn it?

Marco. I learnt it in a brutal boast from those very lips which I have struck.

Vittoria. Oh, Marco, it is too fearful to think that you should have done all this for my sake—that you should risk your life for my miserable wilfulness. Your life—*my* life, which is bound up in yours. You are the being I love most on earth—brother, more than brother, for into my hands, child as I was, our dying mother committed you with solemn words, to love and guard and protect. (*Turns away.*) Oh, merciful heaven, to be the cause of his death. (*Bursts into tears.*)

Marco. Vittoria, you unman me with these tears.

Vittoria. Oh, Marco! I only care for your safety; I can forgive that insult—forgive anything.

Marco. I can never forgive the dishonour of our family. My father, at least, need know nothing of this affair. I bind you to silence.

Vittoria. Alas! our father is aware of Count Platten's visit; he is even now concealed in the secret passage with Count Grimani. I dare not delay; I must give them the signal that the Austrian has gone. (*Taps thrice on table. Contarini and Grimani enter from panel.*)

Contarini. Well, Vittoria, what was the purpose of this Austrian intrusion?

Marco (*significantly*). Vittoria!

Contarini. Well?

Vittoria (*with hesitation*). It was— (*With sudden impulse*) Alas! my father, he came with a terrible purpose. Marco had struck the Austrian for the insult he offered me. It was a challenge.

Contarini. Struck Colonel von Stettenheim! A challenge—a challenge! (*Turns with bitterness from Vittoria.*)

Grimani. A challenge! And Stettenheim for an antagonist. A heavy price to pay for the privilege of prayer.

Contarini. Alas! Marco, that you should have been rash enough to provoke an encounter with such an antagonist as Stettenheim.

Marco. Oh! my father, could a Contarini stand motionless as a statue among a crowd of brutal Austrians, and hear that triumphant boast, a sister's name, a sister's honour, trampled to the dust. I tell you, I would have struck that man if death had followed on the moment. (*Contarini turns away with an exclamation of despair.*)

Vittoria. Marco, dearest brother, I beseech you not to fight this man. Oh! if I could only see Count Salvetti; perhaps some apology—

Marco. Silence, Vittoria; never mention that word again, or, dear as you are to me, I shall hate you. Recollect that my honour—the honour of our house; and more than all this, the honour of Venice, compels this duel. Time presses. I have arrangements to make with Count Salvetti. (*Exit right.*)

Contarini. Lost! Lost! The last of my house sacrificed; the last of the Contarini!

Vittoria. Oh, my father!

Contarini. Sacrificed to a woman's whim—a daughter's disobedience.

Vittoria. Have mercy on me! I would do anything, endure any abasement, grovel to the dust to save *his* life.

Contarini. You can do nothing. In such matters women can easily lay the fuel; but they cannot extinguish the flame! Remember this, if he fall to-morrow, his blood will be on your head. I will never look upon your face again. (*Passes from her, casts himself into chair, remains absorbed in thought.*)

Vittoria (*turning anxiously to Grimani*). Oh, Count Grimani! Carlo, can nothing be done to avert this duel?

Grimani. Nothing! Recollect a blow has been struck; and, by the military code, a blow must be washed away by blood.

Vittoria. Has he any chance against this man?

Grimani. I can give you but little hope. It is very fatal to cross swords with Stettenheim.

Vittoria. Oh, miserable thought, that I must remain helpless here, while he faces death. Carlo—Carlo! for mercy's sake, tell me there is something I can do.

Grimani. I know of nothing. Well, you can pray. Women find prayer an employment for idle time.

Vittoria. I *can* pray. You may deride my weakness, but there is One to whose love weakness is a sure path—beyond the blue sky—Christ and His Mother's love!

Grimani (*suddenly*). Vittoria, I see a way to save him!

Vittoria. To save him! Oh, Carlo, I shall love you so much. You will be so dear to me then. (*Grasps his hands.*)

Grimani. I will save him—my word on it.

Vittoria. How? Oh, tell me!

Grimani. Nay, I have my secret. My work is never told in words.

Vittoria (with sorrow). Alas! I know it. You will save his life, as you would vindicate my honour, by the dagger. No, Count Grimani, I have a better way.

Grimani. A better way! What way?

Vittoria. That *prayer*, which you despise!

(*Angelus. Grimani shrugs his shoulders contemptuously, and withdraws by secret panel. Vittoria casts herself in prayer before the shrine of the Virgin.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT II.—TABLEAU II.

THE FRANCISCAN SETS HIS OWN TRAP.

SCENE.—*Bureau of Baron Falkenburg. Enter Falkenburg, reading despatch.*

Falkenburg. What, another regiment ordered to leave Venice to-morrow—and those rumours of revolt buzzing in my ears! Does the Council at Vienna think I can hold the city by moral force? I might hold it, indeed, with half the number of men, if I could lay hands on that arch-conspirator, Grimani, the very soul of that infernal National Society. I've held the cursed brood a dozen times in my hand; but at the grasp of my fingers they slip away like phantoms. (*Strikes bell on desk. Police Agent enters.*) Well, any fresh intelligence of this Grimani? Has Father Onofrio returned?

Police Agent. Not yet, your Excellency.

Falkenburg. Let him report himself to me the moment he enters.

Police Agent. No. 23 has just reported himself.

Falkenburg. Ah! Our spy at the Palazzo Contarini. Where is he?

Police Agent. With the chief clerk of the Secret Intelligence Department, undergoing the formal interrogatories.

Falkenburg. I'll question him myself. (*Police Agent bows, and goes out.*) These Contarini must be closely watched. There's danger in that old Count Contarini, with his affected submission to our rule; I'll wager my life that this plot for an insurrection is being hatched under his roof.

(*Pietro enters, disguised as a gondolier.*)

Falkenburg. Well, you lazy scoundrel, you've not managed to earn your ten thousand florins, all this time?

Pietro (*trembling*). Not yet, your Excellency; but I shall soon, I'm sure I shall.

Falkenburg. Has that lock been hampered again?

Pietro. The lock was right enough, please your Excellency. It was the door which was fastened against me when I tried to enter the saloon. I again detected a strange voice this morning.

Falkenburg. And when they admitted you?

Pietro. I found nobody but the Count, my master, and his daughter.

Falkenburg. Enough! (*Strikes bell; clerk enters.*) Draw an order for the arrest of Count Contarini. I'll sign it forthwith.

Clerk (*bows.*) Please your Excellency, Father Onofrio has just reported himself.

Falkenburg. Let him enter. (*Clerk bows, and goes out.*) At last we shall have news of Grimani. (*Grimani enters, in the garb of a Franciscan. His manner is brusque and defiant; without awaiting an invitation from*

Falkenburg, he throws himself into a chair, affecting an attitude of fatigue.) Ha, Onofrio! have you secured that devil Grimani?

Grimani. All but—

Falkenburg. All but—the old story.

Grimani. Listen, Baron; we tracked the fox to his lair; fox do I say? no, no, bird—bird, for he must have escaped us by flight through the air; every hole that a weazel could have wriggled through was stopped. I held the salt in my hand; just one pinch on his tail, I said, and the ten thousand florins are mine; but the bird had flown.

Falkenburg. Curses on it!

Grimani. So said I, for I had lost the ten thousand florins; but we gained something, we seized a printing-press and a lot of papers just worked off; but you've got him, Baron. Pshaw! you're playing with me. You've got him.

Falkenburg. No, I tell you.

Grimani. Why, he flew into your hands. On the best authority, he fled to the Palazzo Contarini. What was Pietro doing?

Falkenburg. The fool is here, let him speak for himself.

Pietro. Oh, holy father, if I had only known.

Grimani. You might have guessed it. That hampered lock, Pietro—that hampered lock. Pshaw! you let the prize slip through your hands.

Falkenburg (*to Pietro*). Fool and idiot, I've half a mind to string you up as a traitor.

Pietro. Mercy, Baron, mercy!

Falkenburg. Well, if we have not secured Grimani, at least we will make sure of one traitor. Contarini shall be arrested.

Grimani. Contarini arrested?

Falkenburg. This moment; the warrant is being now drawn.

Grimani. You will pardon me, Baron, but if you play the game in this way, I must throw up the cards.

Falkenburg. What do you mean?

Grimani. Why, the thing is as clear as day. If you arrest Contarini, you scare the bird from the covert. Leave Contarini undisturbed, and Grimani must fall into your hands.

Falkenburg. Well, well, at least we will draw a cordon of spies round the house. Pietro can manage to conceal some of our officers—then at a signal—

Grimani (*with contempt*). Then at a signal. Pshaw! Baron, do you think that's the sort of trap to set for Grimani? Why, Grimani can smell an Austrian plot a mile off. No, no, you must have no cordon of spies, no police concealed in the house; the game must be played by Pietro alone. There, Baron, my hand on it. (*Takes Falkenburg's hand.*) To-morrow evening Grimani in his own person, as Count Grimani, shall stand face to face with you. Pietro, the game is in your hands, be on the alert; when you have ascertained that Grimani is actually in the Palazzo Contarini, you must give some signal.

Falkenburg. I have it. A gondolier shall be kept plying, as if by accident, in front of the Palazzo; at a signal thus (*giving sign*) he shall shoot beneath the balcony, drop this signet-ring to him, Pietro (*gives ring*), and in ten minutes the house shall be surrounded.

Grimani. Excellent device; but mind you don't let an Austrian approach the house till Pietro gives the signal, or all the labour will be lost. Now to your post, Pietro; vigilance, and the reward is sure.

Falkenburg. Recollect, Pietro, this is your last chance; success, and your fortune is made; failure, and you die.

Grimani. Your last chance, Pietro. Ten thousand florins if you win, and death if you fail! (*Exit Pietro.*) Have you any further commands?

Falkenburg. No. By the way, these printed papers you seized at the secret press?

Grimani. I had almost forgotten them; merely a proclamation, apparently from the Secret Society. (*Gives bundle of papers to Falkenburg.*)

Falkenburg. Ah! (*Reads papers, Grimani standing at his side.*) "The Secret Society of Venice strictly commands all patriots to abstain from acts of violence towards the Austrians; the happiness and security of Venice can only be secured by submission to the Austrian authorities; freedom cannot be purchased by blood; our motto must be patience and resignation.

"GRIMANI."

Come, this is satisfactory. (*Grimani has succeeded in extracting despatch from Falkenburg's pocket.*)

Grimani. It is.

Falkenburg. After all, though, this paper may be only some blind.

Grimani. It may.

Falkenburg. I'll not relax my vigilance. If you have occasion to see me, I shall be at Colonel von Stettenheim's quarters. (*Grimani bows. Exit Falkenburg.*)

Grimani (*reading despatch*). Another regiment ordered to leave Venice; ah!—so then to-morrow evening we strike the blow, and Venice will be free. Venice free the stain of lies and deceit washed for ever more from our souls, tricksters no more through the curse of tyranny, but free men, with freedom's gift of truth and honour—not yet Grimani, not this night, but to-morrow, death or liberty; and now one *last* lie to save that rash boy's life, and win Vittoria's cold heart. (*Exit Grimani.*)

TABLEAU III.

THE CAFÉ SINGER.

Quarters of Colonel von Stettenheim. Casemate Chamber in Fort, entered by large door, left. Furnished in rough military style, large table, left, with glasses, bottles, jugs, etc. Small table, centre, arranged for cards, to right a screen dividing off camp-bedstead, camp washing-stand. Candles lighted on the two tables. Colonel von Stettenheim discovered playing at cards at centre table with three other Officers. At side table, Officers drinking and smoking. Prior to change from previous Scene a few bars of the Student Chorus, "Gaudeamus igitur," are heard.*

Officers singing—

"Gaudeamus igitur, juvenes dum sumus.
Post jucundam juventutem, post molestam senectutem,
Nos habebit humus, nos habebit humus."

Stettenheim (*in good humour*). Come, come, you fellows, fresh from the Cadetten house, less of that dreadful noise. Here's a compact with you, relieve me from this abuse of vocal art, and I'll reward you with songs worth the listening.

First Officer. Hurrah, gentlemen! Colonel Max is about to give us a song.

Omnes. Bravo! Silence for Colonel Max.

Stettenheim. Songs, gentlemen, but not from my lips. I've engaged that minx the café singer, Stella, to come to my rooms to-night.

First Officer. What, little Stella, with her affected modesty?

* A popular German student chorus.

Second Officer. And all that wicked impudence beneath. What, guitar and all?

Stettenheim. Yes, guitar, and modesty, and impudence, all combined.

Omnes. Bravo, Colonel Max, bravo!

Stettenheim. Mind you, the girl was half afraid to venture alone into such company, but I pledged my word that she should be treated like a princess at the very least; and now, gentlemen, permit us to have one game in peace. Deal, Major Stoltz.

(*Orderly enters and announces Baron Falkenburg, and retires. Falkenburg enters; Stettenheim rises to meet him.*)

Stettenheim. Ah, Baron, welcome to a soldier's quarters. Gentlemen, permit me, Baron Falkenburg. Pshaw! you all know the Baron, the guardian of every son of the Fatherland here in Venice.

First Officer. By the way, Baron, is Grimani secured yet?

Stettenheim. Not a fair question. Military men have no business to pry into civil affairs.

Falkenburg. Egad, I wish some of you gentlemen had the pleasure of seeking that scoundrel; he leads me a perfect life of hide and seek.

Stettenheim. Come, I'll find him for you.

Falkenburg. You, Colonel!

Stettenheim. Pardon me, Baron, but you civilians leave these Venetians too much alone.

Falkenburg. Leave them alone? I watch them day and night.

Stettenheim. I mean you should endeavour to cultivate friendly relations with them, force them into terms of intimacy, break up that frozen barrier which stands between Austria and Venice.

Falkenburg. Kiss the fair Venetians—hey, Stettenheim?

Stettenheim. Well, that's one method.

First Officer. And a good method, too.

Omnes. Bravo, Colonel Max; kissing for ever!

Stettenheim. You youngsters must remember that Colonels are permitted a certain freedom of action which is denied subalterns.

Omnes. Oh, oh! Too bad!

Stettenheim. Take my word for it, Baron, there's philosophy in a kiss—it destroys isolation; a kiss must have a sequence.

Falkenburg. A sequence! Yes, a blow! Did you count the cost of that kiss, Colonel?

Stettenheim. An impulse of the moment—some devil or the other of mischief had got into my blood. I'd been provoked beyond endurance by the quiet insolence of these Italian women, the insufferable contempt they show towards us. I had not a conception who the girl was, and, for the matter of that, it was pitch dark, and I never saw her face after all—more's the pity, they say it's a face worth seeing. A shriek—a black veil, I tore it aside—more shrieks; but I kissed her lips, egad!—*voilà tout!*

Falkenburg. Not *voilà tout*—a duel!

Stettenheim. Be it a duel. I shall disarm that boy, or a mere flesh wound, perhaps; the seconds will interpose, the honour of everybody will be satisfied, and that's the end of it!

Falkenburg (*shrugs his shoulders*). No, the beginning.

(*Orderly enters, and whispers to Stettenheim.*)

Stettenheim. Ah! An Italian monk wants to see me, let the fellow come in. (*Exit Orderly.*)

First Officer. Has Stella arrived?

Omnes. Has Stella arrived?

Stettenheim. You impatient boys, when you have reached my age, you will discover that no one woman is

worth all this fuss—the world is full enough of women, in all conscience, and one woman is very like another.

(*Grimani enters in monk's dress, ushered in by Orderly. He feigns intense alarm.*)

Falkenburg. What, Onofrio!

Stettenheim (*to Falkenburg*). You know the fellow, do you?

Falkenburg (*to Stettenheim*). A spy of mine, that's all. (*To Grimani*) What is your business here?

Grimani. Oh, Baron, it's a mercy I'm alive. I was going on my way when I left you— Is it safe for me to speak?

Falkenburg. You are safe enough here.

Grimani. I was seized—gagged—a pistol held to my forehead. "Your life is forfeited," whispered a voice in my ear. "It is known to the Secret Society that you are an Austrian spy. Every movement of yours is watched!" My throat is dry, give me a drink—drink. (*An Officer brings Grimani wine.*) "Your life is forfeited," whispered the voice, "for treachery to Venice!" The cold metal touched my brow; I tasted death. After a terrible pause, the voice continued: "Your life is spared; the Secret Society chooses you as an instrument for its work. Do that work, or die!"

Falkenburg. And the work?

Grimani. I swore only to reveal it to the person whose interest it concerns.

Falkenburg. Who is he?

Grimani. Colonel von Stettenheim.

Stettenheim. I am Colonel von Stettenheim.

Grimani (*rising*). Good sir, you are Colonel von Stettenheim?

Stettenheim. Yes, I tell you. Say what you have to say, and be brief.

Grimani. I must speak to you alone.

Stettenheim. Gentlemen, by your leave. (*Comes forward with Grimani.*)

Grimani. This letter from the Secret Society of Venice.

Stettenheim (*glances at letter*). Pshaw! that all.

Grimani. Good sir, the voice bade me tell you that if you disobeyed its injunction you would surely die; that the Secret Society would strike you down amid the bayonets of your men—the bayonets of your men.

Stettenheim. Gentlemen, this letter is a very simple affair.

Grimani (*interrupting Stettenheim*). For Heaven's sake, do not provoke vengeance by a revelation of the secret.

Stettenheim. Silence, fellow! The National Society of Venice threatens me with its vengeance if Marco Contarini fall in the duel to-morrow—assassination. The vile cowards! do they think this threat will stay my hand.

Grimani. I pray you, sir, to think seriously of it. I speak as one whose own life is threatened.

Stettenheim. You have done your work, fellow, you may go.

Grimani. No, no, for mercy's sake don't drive me forth. It's death to me—death! (*Clinging to Falkenburg.*) Oh, Baron, save me—save me. I'm known as a spy now. It is death—death!

Stettenheim. We can give the fellow shelter till you go, Baron. Ho, there! (*Orderly enters.*) Let this holy man remain in the guard-room till Baron Falkenburg leaves the barracks.

Grimani. A thousand blessings for this protection—a thousand blessings. (*Exit with Orderly.*)

Stettenheim. You will join us in a game, Baron? By my soul, the insolence of these Venetians increases day

by day. A threat of assassination. I pray you make merry, gentlemen. I'm sorry this singing girl has broken her faith; but if we lack the song, we have the wine; my next invitation shall be a command. (*Enter Orderly. Speaks to Stettenheim.*) Ah, a woman below; the girl has come at last, my boys. Some of you gallant spirits go and welcome her. (*Three Officers go out.*) You and I, Baron, and the Major, and our good friend the Doctor here will stick to our cards. For my part, I've arrived at that age when the jade Fortune, courted at cards, is just as fascinating as the smiles of a woman.

Falkenburg. The salons of Vienna tell a different tale, Colonel.

Stettenheim. Ah, Baron, social tattle is a sad liar. Come, come, it's for you to play. (*Vittoria, closely veiled, is brought in triumphantly by the three Officers; the other Officers rise as she enters, shouting,* "Brava, Stella, brava!" *Vittoria is led up to Stettenheim's chair. His back is towards her. He continues playing his cards while speaking to her.*) Ah, faithless girl. However, better late than never. Make up for it by giving these gentlemen some of your raciest songs—the very wicked songs.

Omnes. Yes, yes, Stella, the wicked songs.

Stettenheim. Let the girl have room to sing. (*Vittoria speaks to Officer near her.*) Hey! what's that—what does she say?

First Officer. She says she wants to see you alone.

Omnes (*laughing*). Alone, Colonel Max!

Stettenheim. Nonsense, I don't want to see her. I want to hear her voice. (*Vittoria again speaks to Officer.*)

First Officer. Colonel Max, there's some mistake; it's not Stella; it's a lady who wishes to see you.

Stettenheim. What the deuce— Well, what does she say?

First Officer. She says she wishes to see you alone.

Falkenburg (*laughing and rising*). Gentlemen, I think under these delicate circumstances we ought to withdraw.

Stettenheim. Nonsense, Baron. Sit still, the lady must wait till our game is finished. Now, Baron, the game is with you.

(*Platten enters.*)

First Officer. Here's Platten.

Stettenheim (*to Falkenburg*). Platten is acting as my second, Baron. We must hear what he has done. (*Stettenheim rises from table, goes up to Platten with eagerness.*) Ah, Platten, will the fellow fight. (*The Officers group round Platten.*) (*Vittoria, left by herself, gradually crouches away behind a screen.*)

Platten. He does not flinch.

Stettenheim (*to Platten*). Good! Have you made all the arrangements?

Platten. The shore of the Lido — at daybreak to-morrow.

Stettenheim. Ah, we shall be in good time for parade afterwards. (*Orderly enters.*)

Orderly. Colonel, the patrol is ready to leave the barracks. Are there any orders?

Stettenheim. Ah, gentlemen, the Sergeant-major reminds us of duty. One word before we part. This duel is to the death—either I or Marco Contarini must fall. I'll shake each man's hand. (*Shakes hands with Officers, who gradually go off. Shakes hands with Platten.*) Platten, you will be with me at four o'clock to-morrow morning. Have a gondola in readiness. I leave everything in your hands. (*Exit Platten.*) (*To Falkenburg*) Ah, Baron, you need not run away. Come, if we have been baulked in our whist, we can, at least, have a game of écarté. Pshaw! this is not the first duel I have fought. You won't find me a bad companion, notwithstanding the work I have on hand.

Falkenburg. Thanks, Colonel, thanks. But I have that spy of mine to look after. Besides, you have a lady waiting your leisure.

Stettenheim. I had quite forgotten it; but, nonsense, Baron, a trifle of that kind need not drive you away.

Falkenburg. No, no; you really must excuse me. Farewell.

Stettenheim. Farewell then.

Falkenburg (*turning*). Don't forget your engagement for to-morrow evening at half-past nine. The General and Staff sup with me at the Café Quadri.

Stettenheim. I'll be with you, Baron; that is, if life permit.

Falkenburg. Your life is safe enough with such an antagonist, I'll warrant. By the way, you will have to pass my quarters; call in for me at a quarter to nine o'clock.

Stettenheim. Good. (*Exit Falkenburg.*)

(*Subdued chorus of Officers behind scenes*).

Gaudeamus igitur, etc.,
Vivant omnes Virgines faciles formosœ,
Vivant et mulieres, Vivant et mulieres,
Gaudeamus igitur, etc.

Stettenheim (*lights a cigar, sits on a chair in careless manner*). Well, my girl, I'm at your service. (*Vittoria, with trepidation, throws off veil and stands trembling before Stettenheim, who continues sitting and smoking as he gazes on her.*) Ah, by my soul, a charming figure, and a charming face too—eyes with southern passion lulled to rest, and lips—full lips. What blushes too. Blushes in a barrack. Oh, wondrous gift, to have retained the power of blushing. (*Vittoria is aroused by Stettenheim's banter from her condition of fear, and, nerved by indignation, assumes an attitude of dignity.*)

Vittoria. Sir, I am the Countess Vittoria Contarini.

Stettenheim. The Countess Vittoria Contarini! (*He is deeply impressed by her manner.*) Be seated, madam, I beg. (*Offers her a chair, but she, acknowledging his politeness, remains standing. He speaks in embarrassed manner.*) Allow me to offer a thousand apologies for the rudeness of your reception. For the honour of our service, I pray you to believe me, that if I had had the slightest conception it was a lady who sought this interview—but you entered wholly unannounced.

Vittoria. Colonel von Stettenheim, I acquit you of all blame. But these are officers' quarters; I did not dare announce my name. (*In impassioned tone*) I well know what I risk in coming here. The bitterness of scandal, contempt of the world, scorn of my own countrymen, hatred of my family; they would kill me if they knew it. But I am ready to bear all shame, endure all scorn—only grant the prayer that I make. Spare that boy, my brother, when he stands before you.

Stettenheim. Madam, a duel is the fortune of war.

Vittoria. Nay, in this case the certainty of death. How should a mere boy meet you? Is he a foeman worthy of your steel? Have mercy on me. It is a sister who prays this mercy. (*Clasps her hands.*)

Stettenheim. Madam, the Military Code of Austria—I have no freedom in this matter.

Vittoria. Does that Code counsel you to kill a boy? Is that a law for brave men?

Stettenheim. Well, well. (*Turns away.*)

Vittoria. No—answer me. I appeal from a conventional law to the noblest feelings of your heart. Nay, do not turn away. Look me in the face, if you can, and then tell me that this is a law for brave men. Ah, you dare not speak!

Stettenheim (*embarrassed*). He might avoid this duel.

An apology even. And yet I know not that I dare accept an apology.

Vittoria. He dare not make one. I have striven for it, but it was in vain. His honour is too deeply pledged with his own countrymen. He can die, but a coward he cannot be.

Stettenheim. Well, madam, what would you have me do?

Vittoria. Spare him. You are master of your weapon — a flesh wound—not death.

Stettenheim. Impossible.

Vittoria. Impossible! No, not that word. His death is mine. Have mercy on a woman.

Stettenheim. Madam, it cannot be. Nay, I do pity you. I would do all I can to serve you, but the Secret Society of Venice has rendered all forbearance impossible. Their act, not my will, binds me to this work. A threat of death by the dagger hangs over my head if harm befall your brother. Mark me, if I spare him, I stand before my comrades as a coward, awed by a company of miserable assassins. I dare not flinch; I am forced in very honour to defy this threat. This duel must be to the death.

Vittoria. Misery, misery! What do you tell me?

Stettenheim. Read this, madam. (*Gives her letter.*)

Vittoria (*glancing over letter*). Count Grimani's writing. Alas! this then was the meaning of his promise.

Stettenheim (*catching at her words*). His promise. You have seen Count Grimani lately, then? His promise. Doubtless you are cognizant of the lurking place of this arch traitor. (*Vittoria displays terror and dismay.*) By my soul! if Baron Falkenburg had the lightest suspicion of this.

Vittoria (*in abject terror, casting herself at Stettenheim's*

feet). Have mercy on me, he is my affianced husband. Do not make me his betrayer.

Stettenheim (*aside*). This woman is mine if I play the cards well. (*Aloud, raising her*) Rise, madam, I am a soldier, not a police agent; have no fear. Those random words which you have uttered are safe with me. On my honour, I will not betray you.

Vittoria. How can I find words of gratitude? I will plead no longer. I have learnt the nobleness and generosity of your heart. I know my brother's life is safe. You are a soldier—a murderer you cannot be.

Stettenheim. You honour me too much.

Vittoria. I hold to my faith.

Stettenheim. Well, well, as far as I dare promise.

Vittoria. I ask no pledge. I will not bind you by a promise; better than all words, I have learnt the nobleness of your character. I came here broken-hearted, I go in peace. (*Retires.*)

Stettenheim (*aside*). Why, Max, this girl makes a fool of you. (*Vittoria lingers on reaching the threshold. Then, with sudden impulse, returns to Stettenheim, clasps his hand, and presses it with fervour to her lips. Again returns to door, gazing anxiously down the passage, utters a cry,* "Lost!" *flies back in terror to Stettenheim, crying,* "Save me! save me!" *Draws her veil closely over her face, and clings to his arm. Falkenburg rushes in, followed by Grimani.*)

Falkenburg. By all the saints, Stettenheim, it's reported that that fellow, Grimani, is secreted in these very barracks.

Grimani (*throwing back the cowl*). It's a fact, Colonel, on my honour.

CURTAIN.

ACT III.—TABLEAU IV.

THE SPY'S STRATAGEM.

SCENE.—*Chamber in the Palazzo Contarini, as in First Tableau. Early morning. Lights still burning on the table. First rays of morning light streaming into the room; the light increases during progress of scene. Vittoria discovered kneeling at Oratory.*

Vittoria (*rising and coming forward*). It is all in vain, I cannot pray. My soul is dead with fear. The doors of mercy are fast barred and shut. No answer to my prayers. Fool that I have been. What, trust an Austrian! Trust the tiger for generosity, trust the wolf to deny its very nature. Oh, fruitless risk! Fame and honour almost wrecked in my mad venture—saved by hairbreadth safety from discovery by my betrothed. Oh, wild dream of folly, to fancy I could touch that Austrian's heart. I, a woman. What's his estimate of women—a toy to play with, and cast away, and despise. Oh, that lying courtesy with which he fooled me; and I the fool for trusting to his words. Marco, dearest Marco, I would sell my heart's blood to save your life, and yet I am forced to remain here in helpless agony, and watch the dawn of this day that brings darkness to my soul. Oh, hateful sun, lighting the road to death. No, no, I dare not endure this misery alone—death seems to lurk about my footsteps. This anguish is too terrible for solitude. I must have some living being to cling to, some blessed word of comfort and support. (*Contarini enters.*) Ah, my father. (*Goes towards him; he repels her coldly.*)

Contarini. Has he gone, Vittoria?

Vittoria. He has.

Contarini. Well, and—

Vittoria. He went forth with perfect courage.

Contarini. You were with him.

Vittoria. I had watched at his bedside all night; he slept quite calmly. Count Salvetti came here at four o'clock; they left together.

Contarini. Enough, Vittoria. You can leave me. I would be alone. (*She lingers.*) You hear, I would be alone.

Vittoria. Oh, let me remain with you. Chide me as you will, but do not drive me from your presence. Oh, not now—now that the terrible moments have arrived—now that maybe they stand face to face. Oh, give me one word of sympathy.

Contarini. Sympathy! How can I give you sympathy? You, the unfortunate cause of this misery.

Vittoria. Oh, but innocent—

Contarini. The cause, I say.

Vittoria. Have mercy. If you knew how dear he is to me, how much I love him—

Contarini. Love him! What can you do to show your love?

Vittoria (*in tones of despair*). What can I do? Alas! what can I do?

Contarini. Tell me, can your love for him turn this Austrian from his thirst for blood?

Vittoria. No, no, it cannot, it cannot. You are right, I can do nothing. (*Distant murmur of voices.*) Hark! what is that sound?

Contarini. Voices. . They have come back. It must be all over then—all over.

Vittoria (*they listen*). That's Count Salvetti's voice! (*Advances towards the door, then suddenly flies back to Contarini.*) No, no! I dare not go! I dare not meet them—wounded—dying—dead! Oh, my God! (*Noise*

at door; covers her face with her hands. Marco enters.)

Marco. Vittoria!

Vittoria. Marco! Not hurt—not hurt! (*She makes a movement as if to fly towards him. She suddenly arrests herself, and falls upon her knees, clasping her hands in prayer.*) Oh, miracle wrought for me—and I so faithless all the while! Merciful heaven! pardon my want of faith. Pardon those wicked doubts—pardon those feeble prayers! (*Rising and turning to Marco*) Oh, Marco! this is a blessed end—back safe to us once more. (*She clings to him*) Dearest brother!

Contarini. You met this Stettenheim, then?

Marco. Face to face.

Contarini. Bravely done! Well, and how did he acquit himself?

Marco. As we stood on our guard, he seemed strangely moved.

Vittoria (*anxiously, and relaxing her hold of Marco*). Strangely moved!

Marco. He appeared to lack all skill with his weapon —his guard was feeble!

Vittoria. Feeble?

Marco. At the fourth thrust, I broke through his guard.

Vittoria. Well—yes.

Marco. I wounded him!

Vittoria (*with deep emotion*). Wounded him! wounded him!

Marco. Vittoria, why do you start?

Vittoria. Wounded him?

Marco. Yes, wounded him, I say. Drew that cursed Austrian blood.

Vittoria. But not fatally, Marco? Not fatally?

Marco. No, it was only his sword arm.

Vittoria. Oh, Heaven be thanked! Not fatally then. Not fatally?

Marco. A mere trifle, I tell you; but it stopped the duel. Vittoria, what is the meaning of this emotion?

Vittoria. Nothing—nothing! Your safety, Marco—your safety. Oh, if you knew how much I had suffered for your sake, you would forgive my weakness. Not severely hurt, you think—only a slight wound?

Marco. Yes, I tell you; only a slight wound.

Vittoria. Don't be angry with me, Marco. I cannot bear to think of blood being shed.

Contarini. You show strange tenderness for the few drops of blood which this Austrian bully has lost. Would he had been killed outright.

(*Contarini and Marco retire up stage, Contarini placing his hand on his son's shoulder.*)

Vittoria (*aside*). Oh, precious blood! Blood of that noble heart which I have wronged with doubt! Oh, Colonel von Stettenheim, you have nobly kept your pledge.

(*Grimani enters from panel, he meets Contarini, and lays his hand on Marco's shoulder.*)

Grimani. Well done, Marco. I know all that has occurred. You have upheld the honour of Venice. (*To Contarini*) Worthy of the name he bears—worthy of his family. (*Passes on to Vittoria*) Ah, Vittoria! (*leads her forward*) I have kept my promise.

Vittoria. Kept your promise?

Grimani. Has he received any hurt?

Vittoria. No.

Grimani. I have saved his life. Hush! It's as well to let Marco think that he conquered the Austrian; but it was I who held back Stettenheim's arm—I who paralysed his power and his skill.

Vittoria. You!

Grimani. I tell you I did it. I awed Stettenheim with the threat of death; in abject fear, he did not dare to strike. I knew the fellow was an arrant coward.

Vittoria (*with energy*). A coward! No! (*In subdued tones*) At least, the world declares that Colonel von Stettenheim is a brave soldier.

Grimani. Let the world have its way, but *we two* know the truth. (*She involuntarily turns from him.*) Oh, Vittoria, have I not earned a reward? Where is this affection so warmly promised? "Oh, Carlo, if you save his life, I shall love you so." I have saved his life, even at the risk of my own. Does your heart make no response? (*He approaches her; she shrinks from him.*) Still dead and cold? I understand; the old insult rankles in your bosom. That kiss still smarts upon the lips. Be it so. I will win your proud heart with vengeance—be assured of that.

Vittoria. No, no! Not vengeance—not vengeance! I was foolishly excited at the time—let the insult pass.

Grimani. Let the insult pass? No, Vittoria. I have been forced to stoop very low—to bend to meanness and deceit; but I have sworn to avenge this insult. This very night I shall keep my word. Enough—my visit here concerns your father and brother. (*Aloud*) Count Contarini, Marco, I am the bearer of an important communication.

Marco. One moment, I must secure the door.

Grimani. It is needless.

Contarini. But, Pietro—

Grimani. Have no fear. Indeed, I need his presence. By your permission I will summon him. (*Strikes bell.*)

Contarini. What does this mean?

Grimani. It means that I dare once more be Count

Grimani—that I dare cast off the spy's disguise—that I dare face a treacherous cur like Pietro openly and without fear. I do this under the shelter of your roof; in a few hours more I shall be free to do it in the streets of Venice. He comes.

(*Pietro enters.*)

Pietro (*to Contarini*). You rang, Signor? (*Gazes suspiciously round the room.*)

Contarini. That gentleman (*pointing to Grimani*) requires your services.

Pietro (*bowing to Grimani*). Signor—

Grimani. I am Count Grimani! (*Tauntingly*) Father Onofrio has kept his word! Ten thousand florins, Pietro—ten thousand florins! (*Pietro stands awhile thunderstruck, then makes a sudden dash towards the balcony. Grimani covers him with a pistol. Vittoria turns away in terror.*) One inch further, Pietro, and you die! (*Pietro falls to his knees, exhibiting the utmost alarm.*)

Pietro. Mercy! Mercy!

Vittoria. Do not harm him.

Grimani. Harm him, no; he is reserved for a traitor's death. Your help, Marco. (*Marco and Grimani rush on Pietro, he is handcuffed, gagged, his feet tied, and he is left lying on the ground near table.*) We are safe, Contarini. Falkenburg will leave us at peace. I've arranged matters with him—he is to wait a signal from Pietro, so I fear his patience will be sorely tried. Now for my mission.

Contarini. But Pietro can hear.

Grimani. The sharper punishment. The knowledge he would have sold to the Austrians shall be poured into his ears; but his reward will be death, not gold. I warned you to be prepared for a rising (*to Vittoria*). Ah, Vittoria, rejoice with me! The dagger is cast away, once more we grasp the sword of honour. The Secret

Society has decreed a rising *en masse* against the Austrians this very night.

Marco. Bravo, noble Italy, free and undivided!

Vittoria. A rising *en masse!* Oh, useless bloodshed!

Grimani. No! Venice will be free.

Vittoria. Free! Crushed beneath the Austrian guns.

Grimani. Have faith! By to-morrow's dawn the fleet of Italy will be at anchor in the waters of the Republic. In twenty-four hours more, Cialdini will enter Venice.

Vittoria. But the Austrian garrison?

Grimani. Baron Falkenburg has delivered it into our hands. This evening he gives a grand entertainment to the Austrian generals and staff at the Café Quadri.

Vittoria. The Café Quadri?

Grimani. Yes; the Café Quadri. At a given signal we surround the house, and, behold, in a moment the brain of the Austrian force is paralysed; in default of leaders, the Croats and disaffected Hungarians will fall away like sheep.

Vittoria. But these officers will resist.

Grimani. The worse for them; they will die to a man.

Vittoria. To a man!

Grimani. To a man! The web is woven; none can escape. Count Contarini, the Secret Society places you in command of the third section of the National force. Marco, you are entrusted with the fourth. The old instructions stand good. At a quarter to nine o'clock, you must lounge into the Café Florian; the piazza will be gradually filled with a crowd of persons, as usual, languid with the day's heat, eager to enjoy the cool evening breeze, and the glorious moonlight. As the bell of St. Mark's strikes the half-hour, this random crowd will become, as by magic, an organized force. You will immediately assume your command.

Vittoria (*turning to Contarini*). Oh, do not be persuaded to join this *émeute*. The scheme is so rash, so hopeless! A terrible presentiment tells me it must fail.

Contarini. I have sworn implicit obedience to the commands of the Secret Society. I must obey.

Vittoria (*turning to Marco*). Marco, dear Marco, do not go. The plot must end in utter failure—death to all concerned. Nay, Marco, do listen to me.

Marco. How strangely changed you have become! Why, in days past I've seen you almost weep, that, woman as you are, your arm was powerless to fight for Venice; and now you strive to turn us from the goal of freedom—you, *you*, my sister—you who have sworn to stand at my side, and load the musket and bite the cartridge in the hour of death or freedom.

Grimani. Count Contarini, Marco, I pity you! Oh, I had imaged a noble example in the daughter of your house—courage, endurance, undying faith in the destinies of Venice. I dare not go forth to wrestle with death bearing in my bosom the image of a craven heart. My hand will be powerless to strike while burdened with this token of miserable cowardice (*wrenches betrothed ring from his finger*). I cast it from me (*throws down ring*). Henceforth we are strangers!

Vittoria (*with anguish*). Marco! Marco!

Contarini. Grimani!

Marco. Count Grimani, recollect she is my sister. This act of yours dishonours us and our family.

Grimani. Marco, condemn me, if you will; but condemn me by the strength of your own conscience. You shall be Count Grimani for the nonce, I will be Marco Contarini. Pick up that ring, I say, place it on *your* finger, and then I will wear it on mine! (*Marco irresolutely turns away*). Ah! you turn away! (*Vittoria, in anguish, retires up stage and sinks into chair.*) We meet

at a quarter to nine, remember! Ah! I had forgotten that reptile; it's death to us all if he gets free. He would be safely stowed in that *oubliette* beneath the lower corridor.

Contarini. How can he be conveyed there? The servants constantly pass to and fro.

Grimani. You must watch at the entrance. Marco must contrive to raise the stone slab, we can then drag him down the panel stairs. I will watch here. Quickly —Time flies! (*Exit Marco and Contarini. Grimani watches Pietro, pistol in hand.*)

Vittoria (*aside*). Oh, miserable thought, he will die this very night. Struck down by that man's relentless hand, he who has been so merciful, will be denied all mercy. If I could but warn him to stay away from this fearful banquet. No, a warning to him might raise suspicion among the Austrians, a clue to the discovery of the plot. Alas! he must die. Generous and noble as he is, his life must not weigh against the success of this enterprise—a father's—a brother's life—he must die. (*Buries her face in her hands. Marco enters hurriedly.*)

Marco. Grimani, I cannot raise the slab. I dare not call my father from his post.

Grimani. You watch here, I'll go.

Marco. One man's strength is not sufficient; the fastenings are rusted.

Grimani. I *must* try; we dare not leave him here.

Marco. It's useless for one man, I tell you.

Grimani. There's only one method left. Come, Pietro, short shrift and speedy death, prepare to die. (*Cocks pistol.*)

Vittoria. Hold, the report will cause an alarm. I will watch him.

Grimani. You.

Vittoria. Yes, craven as I am. My heart will not

flinch. If he moves, he dies. I have fired many a pistol.

Marco. Count Grimani, we can trust her.

Grimani (*after a moment's hesitation*). Be it so, Marco. (*Gives pistol to Vittoria. Exit Marco and Grimani.*)

Vittoria (*stands for a moment irresolute; she kneels at the side of Pietro, covering him with pistol*). If you raise your voice, you die. (*Takes gag from his mouth.*) Tell me, how can I communicate with Colonel von Stettenheim?

Pietro. I will be your messenger.

Vittoria. Fool, don't trifle with me. I have saved your life now; if you are faithful, I will try to save it hereafter. How can I send a note to Colonel von Stettenheim?

Pietro. At a wave of the hand a gondola will shoot beneath the balcony. Drop your letter; it will be safely conveyed to the Colonel.

Vittoria. Enough. (*Sits at table and writes letter, facing Pietro, with the pistol close to her right hand.*)

"COLONEL VON STETTENHEIM,

"I am dying to express my gratitude to you for all you have done and suffered for my sake. I beg you most earnestly to pay me a visit at the Palazzo Contarini this evening at nine o'clock precisely. Do not fail.

"VITTORIA.

"My maid will admit you at the small door on the canal." (*Folds the letter, takes sealing-wax, melts it at candle, which is still burning, takes up large seal.*)

Pietro. Why, that's your crest; it will betray you.

Vittoria. True.

Pietro. There's a ring on my hand. (*Raises hand.*)

Vittoria. That will do. (*Presses letter to ring on Pietro's finger. Conceals letter in her bosom. Grimani*

and Marco enter.) I have not failed; I surrender my charge. (*Gives pistol to Marco.*)

Grimani. But the gag?

Vittoria. He was stifled; I removed it for the moment.

Grimani. Stifled! It's not so easy to stifle treachery. (*Vittoria retires up stage. Grimani takes up gag.*) Ah, you scoundrel, I had forgotten that ring. (*Tears it from Pietro's finger.*)

Pietro. Yes, brother spy, you *had* forgotten it.

Grimani. Silence, you vile wretch! (*Forces gag into his mouth.*) Now, Marco. (*Marco and Grimani drag off Pietro by passage. Vittoria goes to balcony, waves hand, drops letter, staggers back into room.*)

Vittoria. Saved, saved!

CURTAIN.

ACT IV.—TABLEAU V.

GRIMANI FORGETS VENICE.

SCENE.—*Baron Falkenburg's bureau, as in Tableau II. Falkenburg is discovered pacing the chamber in a state of great irritation. Grimani, seated in a chair in his Franciscan disguise, is watching him with a smile of derision.*

Falkenburg. I tell you my patience is getting exhausted.

Grimani. So I perceive.

Falkenburg. Curse that tongue of yours. Where's Pietro's signal?

Grimani. Where's Grimani? No use the signal without the man. Pietro is indeed a fool, but not such a fool as that.

Falkenburg. You have sworn that Grimani shall stand face to face with me this evening.

Grimani. I swear it again.

Falkenburg. Of course, again and again.

Grimani. Is the oath broken yet?

Falkenburg. Don't bandy words with me. You have always failed in your information about Grimani. I begin to suspect your honesty and good faith.

Grimani. I'm glad of that.

Falkenburg. What do you mean?

Grimani. Your doubt will make you take all the more care of me; it's death if I go into the city.

Falkenburg. Anyhow, we two don't part until Grimani is secured.

Grimani. My word on that.

Falkenburg. I'll have better security than the word of a spy. (*Strikes bell. Police Agent enters.*) Let that man be secured—handcuffs.

Grimani (*starts*). Handcuffs! (*Recovering his self-possession, and with derision.*) What, handcuffs for a man who is forced to cling to you for his life?

Falkenburg. Handcuffs, because it is death, not life, if your pledge fail. (*Two Police Agents enter, one of them with handcuffs.*)

Grimani (*with bravado*). Then handcuffs by all means. Come, good fellow, seal this pledge with an iron seal. (*Thrusts forward his hands. Police Agent puts on the irons*) One more favour—give strict injunctions that I should be well guarded—it's a matter of life to me.

Falkenburg. Or death. You shall be well guarded, never fear. Now, here's the bargain: if we secure Grimani this evening, you shall receive ten thousand florins and my apology; if not, then, at twelve o'clock, a file of soldiers and death.

Grimani. I accept the terms!

Police Agent (*to Falkenburg*). Is the spy to be removed, your Excellency?

Falkenburg. Not yet. I may require to question him further.

Grimani. Then, by your leave, I'll take a doze in that chair. I shall be wide awake when I'm wanted. (*Throws himself into chair, and closes his eyes, affecting to sleep.*)

(*Orderly announces Colonel von Stettenheim, and retires. Stettenheim enters, his right arm in a sling.*)

Stettenheim. Well, Baron, I've kept my engagement.

Falkenburg. Delighted to see you—punctuality itself.

Stettenheim. I regret to say, I've only kept my engagement to break it.

Falkenburg. What's the mystery?

Stettenheim. You must excuse my joining your party this evening.

Falkenburg. But you were undoubtedly engaged to me, Colonel.

Stettenheim. The fact is—(*smiles*).

Falkenburg. Come, come, no excuses about prior engagements.

Stettenheim. I can't in honour say it was a prior engagement.

Falkenburg. Well then, you belong to me. I claim you against the world.

Stettenheim. But not against a lady. I must be frank with you, a lady has commanded my presence. Come, Falkenburg, you know I'm not given to bravado; but I will boast now. A Venetian lady has commanded my presence.

Falkenburg. A Venetian lady command the presence of an Austrian? Impossible!

Stettenheim. I tell you the lady is a very proud

Venetian, and a violent patriot—hates Austria as only a woman can hate.

Falkenburg. A strange story!

Stettenheim. My word for it.

Falkenburg. Your word is amply sufficient; but, in very faith, Colonel, I should have doubted my own eyes, even if I had read the invitation.

Stettenheim. Pshaw! I have the note here. (*Shows direction on envelope to Falkenburg.*)

Falkenburg. And what does the fair lady say?

Stettenheim (*opens note, and lets envelope fall*). The usual sort of letter—vehement words, which admit of no denial.

Falkenburg. And her name?

Stettenheim. The name is sacred; the name is for me alone. (*Falkenburg bows.*) (*In voice of exultation*) Behold, how love triumphs where statesmen fail. No statesmanship could have placed me *en rapport* with a fair Venetian. Change your tactics, Falkenburg. Convert your spies into lovers, and you'll learn every secret. For instance, that grim Franciscan yonder (*turns towards Grimani*); dress him up in the guise of a lover. What, in durance vile, my friend? You'll get good quittance, I hope; but I never meddle in state affairs. (*Turns to Falkenburg*) Come, if I can't give names, I may at least describe form and face.

Falkenburg. I shall be delighted to listen. (*Gives a signal to Grimani to attend to Stettenheim's narration.*)

Stettenheim. By my soul, it's hard to find words when you want to describe a woman's face. Do you care for pictures?

Falkenburg (*with a shrug*). So so! I can't say I'm a connoisseur.

Stettenheim. So so, is about the limit of my artistic knowledge; but I do care for fair faces. Those old

Venetians had the knack of painting—they could paint flesh and blood, and give it the breath of life! When I've looked at their women on the canvas, I've always said to myself, that loveliness must once have been a reality, and not a mere creature of brush and palette. Well, the old art has died out, they say; but the chain of beauty can't be broken! Depend upon it, I've argued, they are somewhere hidden away, those fair faces and those splendid forms—somewhere in those musty old palaces, with their pride, and their poverty, and their patriotism. I was right! Last evening, one of these Venetian beauties stood before me, a living woman, as she might have stood before Titian's easel in the old days—golden hair, and the grand eyes, and the pride of noble birth. It's a return visit this evening, Falkenburg! Give me your congratulations. Bless me, what's come to the monk? (*Grimani, fascinated by Stettenheim's conversation has during the last speech slunk forward, listening intently. Stooping down, he has picked up the envelope of Vittoria's letter. The handwriting reveals to him the damning secret. He sinks on his knees in an agony of rage and emotion, grinding hopelessly at the fetters on his wrists, and well nigh foaming at the mouth.*)

Stettenheim. Gad, is the fellow in a fit?

Falkenburg. Pshaw! By the way, you mustn't do me the injustice of supposing that I asked the lady's name out of mere curiosity; but, remember, there are such things as snares for fine birds.

Stettenheim. I have perfect faith in the lady's sincerity.

Falkenburg. Well, keep this charming engagement, by all means; but at least give such information as will enable me to take measures for your safety.

Stettenheim. My safety is my sword; but, stronger than all weapons, my safety is a woman's love. (*Gri-*

mani bounds to his feet.) Farewell, Baron! Remember, love wins where politicians fail (*Exit.*)

Falkenburg (*to Grimani*). What's the meaning of this emotion?

Grimani (*with rapid utterance*). Surround the Palazzo Contarini. Quick! no time to be lost! Break in the doors—it's life or death!

Falkenburg. I don't understand!

Grimani. It's a snare, that letter to Colonel von Stettenheim.

Falkenburg. Hey-day! The Palazzo Contarini!

Grimani (*aside*). My brain is going.

Falkenburg. So, then, the lady's name is Vittoria Contarini! (*He snatches envelope from Grimani's hands.*) The girl our gallant Colonel kissed the other evening.

Grimani (*with intense emotion*). That letter is a lure and a snare, out of vengeance for that insult. No time to be lost, I say! Surround the house—the man will be murdered by the Contarini.

Falkenburg. We must be calm, Onofrio. At least, I must be calm, for your senses seem to have deserted you.

Grimani (*with impatience*). Can't you see? Don't you understand? They will all be at home now. Grimani will be there; he is her betrothed—depend upon it, he has his part to play in this game of vengeance. Throw your net quickly, and catch them all!

Falkenburg. So, your theory is that that letter is a snare?

Grimani (*with vehemence*). I'll lead the men. There's a secret panel—a panel passage to the great saloon. Let them hold a pistol at my head; shoot me, if I fail!

Falkenburg (*with deliberation*). A plausible theory, no doubt; but, supposing it's wrong, I run the chance of losing you and not gaining Grimani—a double loss!

No; I elect to wait for Pietro's signal—it's always dangerous to alter a scheme in the midst of its execution. Patience, Onofrio—patience! Let's argue the matter calmly. In the first place, having regard to the Colonel's confident manner, I don't think we have any just cause for assuming the existence of a snare. It seems to me far more reasonable to admit the perfect good faith of the lady. Remember, she has already visited the Colonel in his quarters—we have his word for that. You are following my argument, I hope? Indeed, the probabilities are manifestly in favour of a period having been carefully selected for this interesting interview, during which the various members of the family would be absent from the house. I see, by your impatience, that you don't accept my argument. I am sorry for it, but reason is manifestly on my side; whereas your theory, ingenious as it is, involves certain opportunities for your own escape. We are both clever men, Onofrio! (*Strikes bell.*) I must join my guests. This is rare sauce for a feast! (*Enter the two Police Agents.*) (*Speaking with laughter*) By all the saints, how my guests will laugh when I show them this envelope! A Venetian woman, Onofrio—a young patrician lady—that's the jest of it! The fair and noble Countess Vittoria Contarini—gad, how the champagne will sparkle! —turned into a traitor, and all for the love of an Austrian officer! Nothing like the zest of scandal. I can hear the laughter and the jeers, Onofrio! The Colonel's right enough; henceforth, love shall be my head spy. (*To Police Agents*) If that man leave this room till I return, your lives are the price. Good speed, Onofrio! Ten thousand florins and my humble apology, or a file of soldiers and death! (*Exit. Grimani throws himself in despair into a chair, clasping his hands on his forehead. The Police Agents watch him with revolvers.*)

Grimani (*aside*). What's to be done—what's to be done? That wretched woman who was to have been my wife—how can I save her from this horrible shame? That accursed Austrian is free, and I am fettered here—free with all his cursed wiles, and all his luring words. All power of thought has left my brain; every source of inspiration is dried up by my burning heart. Oh, torture of hell! to lie here haunted by that hideous fear, mocked by my miserable impotence. A woman's honour in the scale, and yet no saving balance, not even death's mercy, to outweigh that cursed weight of sin and infamy. Down, down!—lost, lost for ever! (*A pause, then suddenly*) Here, you fellows, set me free! Name your price, what you will, gold, gold! (*The men laugh.*) They laugh. They're right, fool that I am. How can a spy pay in gold? Pay in gold! Gold's no help. What's left? (*Suddenly*) Fear! The old inspiration has returned—success, or death! (*He rises.*) Here, you men, here to me. Is every door closed? Not a living being other than yourselves must hear what I am going to reveal. Here, I say. (*The men approach him, awed by his voice of command.*) You scoundrels! false sons of Italy, here's gold for you—ten thousand florins! (*The men laugh again.*) In your grasp, I say, in your grasp. Tear the beard from my face, and you'll find the money. (*The men start back, awed by his manner. They cover him with their revolvers.*) What, afraid to lay your hands on the gold? Cowards! Then with my own hands, I give it you. (*He tears off beard and shaven crown from his head. The men start back in terror.*) I am Count Grimani, chief of the Secret Society in Venice! You curs, you may well slink away. (*With irony*) Come, seize me, take your reward—and die. Remember, whoever injures me—ay, but one hair of my head, there are fifty daggers sworn to the work of vengeance. Go where

you will, this earth is broad enough, cities, ocean, desert, England, America, Australia, where you will, but be sure those daggers will travel till they reach your hearts—death! (*The men stand silent and irresolute.*) Make your choice quickly. My freedom, or gold and sure death. Quickly, I say. In another minute, I shall shout aloud that Count Grimani is in this room. It will be your death warrant when I do. (*The men are utterly cowed by Grimani's threat and dauntless bearing.*) I give you one minute to decide. Watch the clock. (*A dead silence. After a while, one of the men thrusts his revolver into his belt, steps forward, and releases Grimani from the handcuffs.*) Scoundrels, your lives are saved. And now death and vengeance on that accursed Austrian. (*Grimani hurries to the wall, touches a spring, and disappears by a secret panel.*)

CURTAIN.

TABLEAU VI.

VITTORIA'S TRIUMPH.

SCENE.—*Chamber in the Palazzo Contarini, as in First Tableau. Evening. Moonlight streaming in at the window. Candles lighted on table. Vittoria enters from the door of her apartments. She speaks back.*

Vittoria. Yes, Marietta, good Marietta, watch below. When he comes, you understand all my directions? (*Comes forward.*) Heaven help me. I can't go on with it; this awful imputation of shame and infamy; that woman, my own waiting-maid, despises me now. It will kill me. Marco's gone, and I scarcely kissed him, and my father. Shall I ever see them again? (*Clock strikes nine.*) He does not come. (*Goes up to window.*) What

a lovely night. So calm, scarcely a ripple to catch the moonbeams. The whole city seems buried in profound repose; a night made for peace, and peaceful thoughts. Yet beneath this blessed peace, which nature has proclaimed so lovingly, vibrates the fierce throbbing of men's passion: the fiery thoughts of men's minds burning for the strife. (*Turns from window and goes to clock, gazing intently on the dial.*) He will not come. But the precious minutes, his very life blood, hurry away, and then comes death. Oh, horrible thought! in half an hour the fearful work begins. Grimani has sworn that I shall be avenged; and I know full well the strength of that man's hard, relentless nature. (*Comes forward.*) Oh, dull words of that letter! weak, miserable words which have failed to turn him from his doom. What! could the burning fervour of a heart coin no stronger phrases than those I wrote? Lost—murdered! through the coldness of my warning words. Oh, he must not die—he shall not die. I will not bear the burden of his generosity on my soul. Shall he give me a life, and I give him nothing in return? Risk nothing to save him from a miserable death? No, no, I'll go and drag him yet from that slaughter-house. He shall give heed to my anxious words. (*Strikes bell.*) Marietta, my long cloak and veil. Order my gondola.

(*Stettenheim enters, his arm in a sling.*)

Stettenheim. Fair lady, I have obeyed your charming summons. (*She starts with surprise.*)

Vittoria. Oh, heaven be praised! At last. I feared the letter had failed. I was—I— (*She totters against him. He places his arm round her waist to support her.*) One moment, I shall be myself again. I've been so anxious to see you. It's all past now. (*Regaining her self-possession, and in colder tones, disengaging herself from Stettenheim.*) Colonel von Stettenheim, I have ventured

to request this interview with you. I know that you, at least, will not misunderstand my motives; a sister desires to thank you for a brother's life.

Stettenheim. Let that painful subject be forgotten.

Vittoria. How can I forget it?

Stettenheim. Nay, I pray you.

Vittoria. Can I ever forget the cost of this generosity? That wound—

Stettenheim. A mere chance scratch, I assure you. Not worth a thought.

Vittoria. Those light words will not deceive me. Your arm is in a sling.

Stettenheim. It was needless; but our regimental surgeon is an old woman. You see, I can use my arm quite well. (*Takes arm from sling, but uses it with evident pain.*)

Vittoria. No, no, it gives you sad pain. Let me—let me— (*Takes his arm and tenderly replaces it in sling, clasping his hand.*) Oh, merciful hand which held back the deadly sword. (*Releasing hand.*) I can never requite this noble act.

Stettenheim. Tell me, does your brother—your father know aught of the truth?

Vittoria. How should I dare to tell them? If they knew it, if they even suspected it, I should be utterly lost.

Stettenheim. They hate me, then, as they hate all my race?

Vittoria. Alas!

Stettenheim. And yet you have ventured to ask me here, to this mansion of your family, where I am regarded as a deadly enemy.

Vittoria (*in anxious tone, and with great earnestness*). Oh, have no fear. Think you I would let one hair of your head be injured? They are away—away in the

city. They will not return for a long time. Have no fear. My maid, my own foster sister, watches at the entrance below.

Stettenheim. Oh, sweet girl, it needs no words, no assurance save the earnest gaze of those dark eyes; I *can* trust in you. By my faith, this meeting is charmingly devised. Shame on me to have dreamt of danger. Here in my lady's bower lives love, not fear.

Vittoria (*starts from him*). Love! Such a thought is absurd. Recollect, I am a Venetian; you are an Austrian.

Stettenheim. Oh, sweet lady, love's country is the world. Bound and barrier sink beneath his sway. Why, sweet one, those snowy Alps would melt in his fervent glow. At this hour Austria and Venice are dead to us; naught lives but a lover, and the lady of his soul; the theft of that evening must be the happy gift of this. Dearest girl. (*She turns from him shuddering. He grasps her hand.*) How now? This hand, it almost freezes in my grasp. Why, sweet one, 'tis you who are afraid. Oh, folly of fear, am I not at your side? A lover and a slave. Still so coy?

Vittoria (*breaking from him, and deeply agitated*). Colonel von Stettenheim, this language. Oh, if you knew the pain of those words!

Stettenheim (*aside*). A woman's coyness. (*Approaching her.*) Why, sweet one, none can hear us. I breathe these words in your ear, words for you alone. Why do you tremble? Think you this still, calm night has hushed away all sound to play the eavesdropper? Oh, don't let miserable fear break in upon this happy hour.

Vittoria. For mercy's sake cease—cease! You have fearfully misunderstood my motives (*speaking through tears*). I do not deserve this insult at your hands.

Stettenheim. An insult! Have you forgotten that

letter, praying me to come at this hour of the evening? And your eager reception? Why, your very heart belies these cold, strange words. When I entered, it well nigh led you captive to my arms.

Vittoria. I was deeply moved. Is it a small thing for a sister to meet the man who has given her a brother's life?

Stettenheim. But those luring words, "They are away —away in the city." "They will not return." "My maid watches below."

Vittoria. Would you, an Austrian, have dared to enter this house without a complete assurance of your safety?

Stettenheim. Pshaw! This is folly; we dally with rapid time. Oh, Vittoria! the golden moments glide away. (*Approaches her.*)

Vittoria. Do not approach me. One cry of mine—

Stettenheim. One cry! Why, foolish one, you dare not raise your voice.

Vittoria. You are right; I dare not.

Stettenheim. The vantage ground is mine. Shall a lover forego his triumph? If you raise your voice, you are lost.

Vittoria (*with intense scorn*). Lost! Oh, worthy boast! What! conqueror of a woman's confidence? Victor of a woman's faith? Is this the measure of Austrian chivalry? Is this the treatment that Austrian ladies receive from Austrian gentlemen? Be it so! Shatter the idol I have raised in my own heart. Show me the cowardice and brute force which lie at the core of this broken image. Remember, if I am lost, *your* life pays the forfeit! (*He withdraws from her, awed by her expression of indignation.*) (*In tone of sorrow*) Oh! I had little thought of fearing you! I had pictured to myself a soldier, and an enemy—but an enemy brave and

generous. Through this weary day, I have thought of Chevalier Bayard—"*sans peur et sans reproche.*" I knew that woman's honour had been sacred in his hands. I had not thought that a sister's gratitude meant a sister's degradation. (*She retires apart, and sits in chair, covering her face with her hand during the following speech.*)

Stettenheim (*aside*). I swear this girl awes me in her very helplessness. I fear her, as I have never feared man. (*Aloud*) Madam, I pray your pardon for any random words I may have uttered. Believe me, I would not for worlds merit your contempt. I have deeply erred, and I dare not ask forgiveness. I can only express my regret for the pain I have caused you. I will no longer intrude my presence here. No living soul knows of this visit, and none shall ever know, be assured of that. Your honour *is* sacred in my hands. One moment,—Maximilian von Stettenheim avows that he is not "*sans reproche;*" but, remember, if you ever need his service, he is your friend to death. My gondola waits below. Farewell! (*He bows. Vittoria rises and acknowledges his salute in stately manner. Stettenheim picks up his cloak, throws it over his shoulders.*)

Vittoria. Farewell! (*Aside, with sudden emotion*) Farewell! Oh, merciful Heaven! that word means death—death! (*Aloud to Stettenheim, who is on the threshold*) Colonel von Stettenheim.

Stettenheim. Madam.

Vittoria. One moment. (*Stands irresolute, trying to frame some excuse.*)

Stettenheim (*in a tone of pique*). It grieves me to refuse a lady; but, indeed, I have no time to lose. The fact is, I have a special engagement.

Vittoria. An engagement?

Stettenheim. I sup with Baron Falkenburg this evening.

Vittoria (*in terror*). You sup with Baron Falkenburg!

Stettenheim. Again, farewell!

Vittoria (*in tones of great agitation*). No, no! You cannot go! You cannot go! You must stay here—here in this room—here with me—with me! (*Drags him vehemently from the door, and, in her efforts to retain him, faints in his arms.*)

Stettenheim. What! has the ice melted at last?—the latent passion burst into flame? I see it now! Oh, sweet dissembler! The victory was not to be lightly won—a contest and a fight! Oh, glorious triumph! (*He kisses her.*) Those lips are deadly cold. What fainted! fainted in my arms! Oh, darling burden! (*Supports her to chair.*) I dare not call for assistance. Ah, the colour comes again! (*He watches her, drawing the tresses of her hair through his fingers.*) Oh, treasure of golden hair! The old story of woman's nature—a little more coyness, or a little less; but always victory on the side of love.

Vittoria (*recovering, but still unconscious*). What, gone to that banquet? Gone to his death? Have mercy—mercy! Grimani, spare him—spare him! If others must die, save his life! Marietta, where am I? Marietta! Marietta!

Stettenheim. What can those words mean? (*To Vittoria*) Hush! hush! We shall be overheard. You are here—here in your chamber. I am close to your side—Maximilian von Stettenheim.

Vittoria. You are here—still here (*gropes feebly for his hand*). Oh! Heaven be thanked for that! Give me your hand—your hand! Still here—still here! (*she gradually recovers, rises, and glances at clock*). (*Aside*) Oh, thank Heaven! only ten minutes more of this torture and this shame! (*Aloud*) How weak and foolish I am—women are so stupid when they faint! (*In changed*

tone) Oh, I remember, you were saying that you had an engagement to sup with Baron Falkenburg. I recollect now, he asked you last night.

Stettenheim. But why should I not keep this engagement?

Vittoria (*with confusion*). Why—why, I know not. (*Archly*) Why, you are my guest now, Colonel von Stettenheim! A Venetian lady bids you welcome to her house. What! is Baron Falkenburg's company preferable to mine? Would your ladies at Vienna accept such an excuse? Pray be seated—be seated! (*Offers him chair, and sits herself.*)

Stettenheim. Those words!

Vittoria. What words?

Stettenheim. You uttered some strange words as you were recovering just now.

Vittoria. Indeed! I know not. What could I have said? I seemed to be in a sort of dream—a feeling of wild confusion.

Stettenheim. "Grimani, spare him! If the others must die, spare his life."

Vittoria (*concealing her terror*). Did I say that? How absurd. I never could have talked such ridiculous nonsense.

Stettenheim. No, my ears were not deceived.

Vittoria. Well, well! if I did make use of those words, it was merely some random utterance. Why attribute so much weight to an absurd trifle? Dreams and faintings — it's the same sort of thing when we regain our consciousness. (*In light tone*) Listen, I declare one can just catch a sound of the band in the Piazza—a valse, I'm sure—one of those delicious valses of Strauss. Your military bands are simply perfect; I always long for a dance when I hear them play. (*With affected unconcern*) Tell me now—I'm so anxious to know

the truth. They say your German ladies valse so well; is it really a fact?

Stettenheim. Tell me first what those words mean.

Vittoria. What, still harping on the old string? Nonsense—nonsense! How can one explain nonsense?

Stettenheim. You evade my question. You force me to go and learn the meaning of those words.

Vittoria (*concealing a shudder*). You still dare to speak of leaving, when a lady bids you remain!

Stettenheim. I'm resolved.

Vittoria. But I command! This room is my kingdom. I am a despot here! (*She rises, and with affected playfulness takes his hand.*) My prisoner! bound with strongest chains—a woman's will.

Stettenheim. No, no! Cease these foolish words. Farewell! (*He breaks from her.*)

Vittoria (*losing all self-control, and seizing Stettenheim's hands with vehement grasp*). No, no! I say, you shall not go—you shall not go!

Stettenheim. The meaning of those words?

Vittoria. Their meaning? I tell you they have no meaning.

Stettenheim. It's false! The truth breaks upon me —some horrible foul play is about to take place. Let me go, I say; or, by Heaven, woman as you are, I'll strike you down. (*They struggle, she breaks from him, flies to the door, turns key, snatches it from lock, and conceals it; he follows her to the door.*)

Stettenheim (*trying door*). Locked—the key!

Vittoria. I have it.

Stettenheim. Give it, I say.

(*Vittoria goes up, flings key over balcony.*)

Vittoria. It has a safer guardian than my weak hands. You cannot leave this room, Colonel von Stettenheim.

Stettenheim. That other door!

Vittoria. It leads to my apartments. The windows are barred. The patricians of Venice guard the honour of their daughters with iron bolts.

Stettenheim (*in indignation*). Vile deceiver! murder is on hand, and I am caged here. Trapped by a woman's snare; and those men I love, comrades of the battlefield, threatened with death, basely murdered, struck down by the assassin's blow. (*Fiercely*) What is the danger that threatens that banquet? By Heaven! you shall tell me. (*Seizes her by the hand.*) Speak. woman! Speak, I say! or I'll have you dragged to the common prison. The jailor, and the lash! (*Thrusts her from him.*)

(*Vittoria utters a cry of anguish.*)

Stettenheim. Speak, I say! Silent still. Accursed wretch! to lure me here, and fool away the precious moments, men's life blood, with your lying tricks. Those assassins at their work! My voice will be heard from the balcony. An alarm may still be in time. (*He goes up; she stops him.*)

Vittoria. No, no, it's death!

Stettenheim. Be it death.

Vittoria (*passionately clinging to him*). My death as well as yours; the death of the woman who has risked all to save your life.

Stettenheim. Their lives! their lives, I say! (*Flings her from him, goes up towards window. Clock strikes. She rises, follows him, and again arrests him.*)

Vittoria. Hark! the signal. Venice has risen upon Austria. All's over. For life or death; the work's done. Your voice from the balcony will be our death; it cannot save their lives. The Café Quadri is surrounded. If they resist they die. (*Stettenheim utters a groan of intense anguish; his whole force seems paralysed; he staggers down the stage to a chair, into which he sinks mechanically.*)

Your life is saved. I have sworn to save it. But not a moment is to be lost. A disguise is ready in my room. (*Points to her chamber.*) My maid will conduct you to a market boat which I have engaged to convey you to the mainland. You will then be able to reach the Austrian lines. Have no fear, your escape is secured.

Stettenheim. Escape—no!

Vittoria. What?

Stettenheim. My comrades slaughtered at the Café Quadri. Let those butchers finish their work here. (*Clasps his hands over his face in despair.*)

Vittoria. Merciful heaven!

Stettenheim. The better part of my life lies dead with them. There's but little left for the assassin's knife.

Vittoria. This is madness.

Stettenheim. No, despair.

Vittoria (*calmly and with determination*). Be it so. I too can die. My own kindred will kill me on the moment if you are discovered here. (*Aside*) Better die than live on in contempt and desolation; better die than live on with the torture of a hopeless love. (*Aloud, with passionate remonstrance*) No, no, worse than death—my name blackened with shame, branded with infamy, blotted out from kith and kin. Not death alone, but death and infamy! Have mercy on me, if you have none for yourself. Go, save me from worse than death.

Stettenheim (*rises*). I yield, madam. Farewell.

Vittoria. We part to meet no more; you gave me a life, I have saved yours. Would to heaven I could have saved their lives for your sake. The cruel words you have spoken bore the impress of your agony. They are sacred henceforth—more precious to me than all loving words I have ever heard. Farewell for ever (*with intense but suppressed emotion*). One day, you shall tell the Austrian lady who will be your wife—a Venetian girl

saved the life which is to be her happiness and joy. Every moment is dangerous; the disguise, quickly. (*Listens.*) Hush! some one approaches. Merciful heaven, all is lost! Conceal yourself in my room.

(*Grimani suddenly enters from panel door.*)

Vittoria (*in terror*). Heaven help us! too late! (*She flies behind Stettenheim for protection.*)

Grimani (*flying on Stettenheim with a long dagger*). Scoundrel, we meet at last!

Stettenheim (*drawing*). Keep your distance at your peril, man!

Vittoria (*to Stettenheim*). Do not harm him.

Grimani (*drawing back*). Harm me! Oh, wretched woman, this awful shame, then, is the secret of your waning patriotism? In the hour of *our* danger, in the hour of *our* triumph—a lover, and an Austrian—this dalliance of infamy. Oh, monstrous disgrace!

Stettenheim. This lady is innocent. I swear it by all that's sacred.

Grimani. Liar! I am Count Grimani. I *was* that Franciscan spy you were merciful enough to pity. I was torn with an agony of suppressed rage that those handcuffs kept me from your accursed throat! (*He again strives to close with Stettenheim. He is foiled. In his rage he tears off his monk's dress, and prepares to wrap it round his arm.*) Knife and vengeance, against infamy and sword!

(*Marco enters from panel, quickly followed by Contarini.*)

Marco. We are waiting for the final signal!

Marco. } (*perceiving Stett.*) What does this
Contarini. } man do here?

Grimani. Look to your daughter, Contarini, when you have shot down that Austrian, we shall have full time for the other work.

Contarini. This man's presence—here at such an

hour. What! has the Austrian dared to outrage the sacredness of our very hearth? He shall pay dearly for this—death—as a man would shoot a dog.

Marco. Death! (*Contarini and Marco cover Stettenheim with their revolvers. Vittoria starts forward and shields Stettenheim.*

Vittoria. Stop, I say! your bullets shall pierce me first—the fault is mine. He came here at my request. Stop, I say, if he die, I die also.

Contarini. Oh, fearful words! she avows her guilt. (*Drops his revolver, and forces down Marco's.*) Marco, lay down your weapon. Let the Austrian skulk away—let that woman go to her shame. You have no sister now, Marco. I have no daughter, we have nothing to avenge.

Vittoria (*flies to Contarini's feet*). Mercy—mercy! I'm not guilty. I swear it! a few words will tell you all. Listen to me, for heaven's sake.

(*Noise outside. Crash at door. Door is burst open. Austrian soldiers with Lieutenant Platten pour into the room, they seize Grimani, Contarini, Marco, and Vittoria. Falkenburg enters. Two or three female servants steal into the chamber.*)

Stettenheim (*with anxiety*). For heaven's sake, Falkenburg, beat the rappel, occupy all the posts in the city, there's fearful mischief on hand, a conspiracy to slaughter us all.

Falkenburg. Hey?

Stettenheim. Don't stop for explanations, give your orders, my word, they are needful. (*Falkenburg speaks to an orderly who goes out.*)

Falkenburg. Now for the prisoners. Have we secured Grimani?

Grimani (*coming forward, his hands held by two soldiers*). Count Grimani stands before you.

Falkenburg (*with eagerness and astonishment*). By all the saints—Onofrio!

Grimani. No thanks to your wit that we stand thus, Baron Falkenburg. I don't ask for mercy. I should have shot you this evening, if a woman's cursed handiwork had not marred my plans.

Falkenburg (*with mock politeness*). Your obedient servant. I am much beholden to the lady in question; indeed, it is solely to her good offices that I owe the satisfaction, to me, of our present interview. This envelope (*takes envelope from his pocket*) in the handwriting of the Countess Vittoria Contarini, was, in truth, Pietro's signal!

Contarini.
Marco. } Vittoria's letter to the Austrian!

Falkenburg (*to Grimani*). In looking at the handwriting, you did not observe the seal. I understand now the cause of your emotion, probably your heart threw your head out of the balance; that seal bore the impression of my signet ring. I caught sight of the seal, quite by chance, as I was about to sit at table; better late than never, I cried; and behold the adage is amply justified!

Contarini.
Marco. } Vittoria's treachery!

Contarini. Oh shame! blackest shame! a traitress too.

Vittoria (*breaks from soldiers and flies to Contarini.*) No, no, I swear it by all that's sacred! there was not one word of treachery in that letter.

Contarini. Away, abandoned wretch, do not pollute my sight. Live on in your shame, and bear for evermore a father's curse upon your brow. (*He spurns her from him. She totters towards Marco.*)

Vittoria. Oh, Marco! listen to me! I swear I am innocent. Have mercy—mercy.

Marco. What! you weary of that vile sin, and you would sin no more? A traitress! and you would fain cease to sell Italian men to Austrian tyrants? (*During these words he has advanced fiercely upon her, and she has quivered away from him.*) Well, I will have mercy —you *shall* sin no more! (*He suddenly draws a dagger and tries to stab her—his blow is intercepted by Stettenheim. He is disarmed by the soldiers who rush upon him.*)

Vittoria (*sinks beneath Marco's blow*). Oh, Marco—Marco! I have loved you so. (*She falls back insensible, the women gather round her, but afford her no assistance.*)

Falkenburg. Remove the prisoners, the three men; (*turning to Vittoria*) ah, by the way, that woman.

Stettenheim. My word for her, Falkenburg.

Falkenburg. Ah, colonel, do not fear that the police will prove your rivals in that quarter. *Au revoir!* (*Exit Falkenburg. Soldiers form at command of Platten, and lead out Grimani, Contarini, and Marco.*)

Stettenheim (*to the women*). Has she recovered? Why, for shame, do you let her lie there? Raise her up, and carry her to her chamber! Obey, I say.

First Woman. Traitress! we will not defile our hands by touching her body. The curse of Venice is upon her head.

The other Women. The curse of Venice! (*They steal out of the room.*)

Stettenheim. What, alone—alone! deserted by all! cast out, condemned! (*He kneels at her side, and tenderly raises her head.*) Noble-hearted girl! Saint of purity! you have freely ventured your life of nobleness and honour for the sake of my unworthy life. I swear I will save *their* lives, if I give my own as the price.

(*Subdued noise of crowd outside. Enter Falkenburg. Stettenheim rises.*)

Falkenburg. No time to be lost. Orders have just arrived; the Governor desires the concentration of the troops. We must withdraw as soon as the house is searched. But that girl, what do you mean to do with her?

Stettenheim. Place her in the hands of her friends. I know not—

Falkenburg. That means death. The Venetians swear she has betrayed them!

(*Subdued cries without,* "*Traitress!*" "*Vile wretch!*" "*Infamy!*")

Stettenheim. It's false!

Falkenburg. They swear she has sold her honour to the Austrian officer.

Stettenheim. For mercy's sake! (*Cries outside.*)

Falkenburg. You hear the words? Egad, this intrigue of yours is likely to become a political matter. The crowd is furious. The women would tear her to pieces, if she fell into their hands.

Stettenheim. On my solemn oath, I declare her innocence, her purity, her nobleness. I tell you, she has saved my life at the risk of her own—saved my life at the cost of her own fair fame. Help me, Falkenburg; help me, for heaven's sake, at this terrible moment of my life. Every Austrian lady to whose care I could confide the Countess Vittoria has left Venice, save and except the Baroness Falkenburg,

Falkenburg (*with anger*). Good heavens, sir! Do you mean to insult me? My wife, and this woman of whose degradation and infamy I heard you boast an hour ago.

Stettenheim (*aside*). Oh, fearful retribution for those accursed words!

Falkenburg. Make your choice of some refuge quickly —no time is to be lost. (*Exit.*)

Stettenheim (*in despair*). What choice is left? Oh, merciful heaven! what choice? The Venetians will kill her in their mad fury. Baron Falkenburg rejects her with shameful scorn. Alas! nothing's left, only shame, and degradation, and reproach—the refuge of my barrack room! (*He turns away.*)

(*Vittoria struggles to her feet. She drags herself to the window, left. The opprobrious cries are redoubled, when the crowd outside catches sight of her. She shrinks back in terror; perceiving Stettenheim, with tones of anguish and reproach.*)

Vittoria. I saved your life. Well, leave me to death and shame! (*She sinks into a chair.*)

Stettenheim (*with vehemence*). Life and honour! If I live (*kneels at some distance from her chair*). I throw at your feet my unworthy life which you have saved—with all its sin, and all its shame, and all its base love of self. Amid those false cries of infamy, I pray you to cast on me the redeeming power of your noble nature. I kneel before you as a pilgrim at the shrine of holiness. My guardian saint—though shame, and calumny, and false reproach be heaped against you; my glorious image, with God's halo round your brow, of purity and self-sacrifice and undaunted devotion! Oh, noble lady, your nobleness has rendered womanhood sacred to me for evermore. Give me your faith! I dare not ask your love—I am all unworthy of that great gift.

Vittoria (*rising with dignity*). I give you my faith.

(*Enter Falkenburg.*)

Falkenburg. No time to be lost; the troops are forming. By the saints, they'll have a hard matter to keep a passage open to the gondola!

(*Renewed cries of populace without against Vittoria.*)

Vittoria (*clinging to Stettenheim*). Where am I to go? Save me!

Stettenheim. Only one refuge is left—Heaven help me!—my barrack room.

(*Vittoria starts from Stettenheim with an exclamation of abhorrence, but in another moment her confidence returns.*)

Vittoria. I give you my faith. (*She allows Stettenheim to lead her towards the door of the saloon, he supporting her on his arm. Soldiers enter from the door of Vittoria's apartments, holding in check with their muskets a crowd of Venetian men and women who press upon them.*)

Crowd (*with vindictive gestures*). Death to the vile woman who sold her country and her honour to the Austrian—death and infamy!

(*Starting from Stettenheim, Vittoria, almost involuntarily, makes a gesture of deprecation to the crowd. The cries of infamy are redoubled, and she sinks into Stettenheim's arms; the crowd rushes forward, bearing down the soldiers, as Stettenheim carries her in his arms through the grand entrance of the saloon.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT V.—TABLEAU VII.

THE BRIDGE OF SIGHS.

Scene—Antechamber to condemned cell. Door of cell, right, a door, left; at end of stage, the passage through the "Bridge of Sighs" affords a practical passage from the opposite palace; two windows, right and left of the bridge entrance, look across the narrow canal to the opposite windows and dank walls. Stettenheim and Platten discovered. Jailor watching at door of cell.

Platten. Any chance that these men will be reprieved?

Stettenheim. I dare not hope it; but still there is a hope. My mother was to have an interview with the Empress this very day. Heaven knows, I've moved every power at Vienna.

Platten. You will pardon me, Colonel, but with regard to these prisoners, I really confess that I have no great sympathy with them. Come now, confess; but for that girl's sake, you would not have used these efforts.

Stettenheim. I do not deny it.

Platten. Well, then, I really would not take the matter so seriously to heart. These love episodes of a man's life, they lightly come and go—why, I've learnt that very philosophy from your own lips. I thought that love was the passion of a fleeting hour.

Stettenheim. I thought so, too.

Platten. Well—

Stettenheim. Well, it was a false thought, Platten. Love is a thing of terrible endurance—stronger than all else—stronger than honour—stronger than shame—stronger than the fear of death. My philosophy has been scattered to the winds; I know the truth now. Happy for you, if you learn it less bitterly than I have! oh! thrice happy, if you learn it from the smile of her you love! I have learned it from the random babble of fevered lips—from a mind shattered by anguish and despair—from the struggle of feeble life in the eager grasp of death; that's been my rough schooling in love this week past, Platten. (*Enter Orderly with papers.*) Ah! at last! (*anxiously snatches paper from Orderly, who retires. Stettenheim glances over paper, then crushes it in his hand with expression of despair*).

Platten. What, fresh disaster in Germany?

Stettenheim. No; it's the final negative to all hope of

a reprieve. (*Aside*) Only one way remains; it must be followed, cost what it may. I must turn traitor and save their lives, as she saved my life that fatal night. (*Goes toward cell.*) Jailor, I desire to see your prisoners.

Jailor. Colonel, I pray your pardon; but I am forbidden to open this door unless upon a written order.

Stettenheim. I am military Commandant here.

Jailor. My orders, Colonel, are from Baron Falkenburg; I dare not disobey.

Stettenheim. Enough, you do your duty; here is the Baron. (*Enter Falkenburg, door left.*) Falkenburg!

Falkenburg. One moment, Colonel, I must inspect my prisoners. This old building makes the most unsatisfactory prison we have in Venice, but we are so cursedly pressed for room just now. (*Looks through flap in door of cell.*)

Stettenheim. Baron, to my surprise, I have been refused admission to the prisoners.

Falkenburg. The jailor has only obeyed his orders.

Stettenheim. Surely you would not refuse me?

Falkenburg. Colonel, in this matter I have no authority; my orders are from the Governor of Venice.

Stettenheim (*aside*). Curses on this man! (*Aloud*) But that unfortunate girl, the Countess Vittoria Contarini, surely you will not refuse her one last farewell?

Falkenburg. I dare not grant it. Besides, let me tell you, it's scarcely mercy that she should see them.

Stettenheim. That's my affair, Falkenburg. I desire a pass on her behalf.

Falkenburg. Colonel von Stettenheim, you have already interfered far too much in this matter. I protest against the authorities of the Empire being held at the beck and call of some Venetian lady that Colonel von Stettenheim has chosen to take under his protection.

Stettenheim. Baron Falkenburg, this is not a time for a fracas between us, but in my presence no man shall breathe a light word against that noble girl. You well know that, deserted by all her friends, she is under the protection of the Baroness von Rosen, my sister.

Falkenburg. Pardon me, I merely vindicate my authority from interference. (*Exit Falkenburg.*)

(*Orderly enters and whispers to Stettenheim.*)

Stettenheim (*to Orderly*). Let the Countess Vittoria Contarini be conducted here. (*Exit Orderly.*) (*To Platten*) You must help me now, Platten. I may never make such another request. Fly to the Governor of Venice, and obtain an order for Vittoria's admission to the cell; she will remain here on the spot till you return. I know I can trust you, I know you will not fail me.

Platten. I will not fail. (*Exit Platten.*)

Stettenheim. At last, a woman worthy of worship—worthy of holiest love, and I must lose her. Oh, bitter retribution, lesson learnt too late. Vision of a better life—my life redeemed by her—blessed vision, seen but to vanish as a dream. Not self and selfish love, for death stands close at hand—self-sacrifice for love—a traitor's death, but a noble woman's love.

Vittoria is led in on arm of Orderly. Stettenheim leads her forward. Orderly retires. Vittoria exhibits great physical and mental weakness.)

Stettenheim (*tenderly*). My poor child, how weak you are.

Vittoria. Oh, quite well—quite well? Where is Colonel von Stettenheim? I wish to see him.

Stettenheim. Don't you know me, Vittoria?

Vittoria (*gazing at him*). Oh, yes, yes, how foolish; it was only for the moment. Faces glide away so strangely from my mind. Let me take your hand.

When I grasp your hand all goes well, and I feel quite strong. It was a fearful time, and I've not recovered yet—oh, so very, very fearful! My memory seemed utterly lost. Only one recollection of a whole life remained unbroken: the thought of your love; I could cling to that—to that alone amid the whirling chaos. Oh, sweet consolation, it saved me from madness and despair, and led me back at last to peace and calm. You *do* love me still? Oh, Max, say you love me. The words lull away all pain, and build up the shattered thoughts.

Stettenheim. I do love you, Vittoria, you know I love you.

Vittoria. I *do* know it—your wife, my husband. Oh, Max, those words mean happiness—happiness, though all else be sad and dark, sunshine for our lives, sunshine. But why this gloomy place? Why bring me here?

Stettenheim. It is their prison. Alas! there is no hope of a reprieve.

Vittoria. A reprieve! What reprieve?

Stettenheim. They are doomed to die.

Vittoria. To die! Death! Why talk of death? No, no, I cannot die now; you love me, I cannot die!

Stettenheim. I speak of your father and brother, Vittoria.

Vittoria. My father! Oh, yes, I recollect now (*in terror*). Oh, that fearful curse; it rings in my ears, tears my very brain! All is dark again. (*Clings to him.*)

Stettenheim. They have forgiven you, dearest; they know your innocence. I've tried so often to make you remember that you are forgiven.

Vittoria. Forgiven! Then all's well. Let's go, I can't breathe here. Where did you say we are to live? That castle by the river? I forget names, but the joy of the thought remains. It was your home, they would love me; it was your home, you would be at my side. Oh,

Max, pray for me as you love me; pray that the thick darkness may never cover my soul again, that the one ray of light, your love, which pierced the darkness, may never be quenched.

Stettenheim. You are better now, dearest, you will soon grow stronger, and then—

Vittoria. And then I shall awake—your love is only a sweet dream now—I shall awake and behold its devotion and truth. Oh, Blessed Mary, listen to my prayer! When I gaze on him, give the light of knowledge to my eyes; when I hear his voice, quicken the thought of him in my soul.

Stettenheim (*aside*). To lose her now; but I have sworn to preserve their lives.

Vittoria (*clings to him*). If my soul drift away into that dark void, hold me in your arms, whisper your name in my ear, don't weary; and through Our Lady's merciful love, that sweet word, like a magic cord, will draw me back to consciousness and memory, and the blank gaze of my eyes will be filled with your image; and I shall be saved, a living soul in a living body. Promise!

Stettenheim (*aside*). My life—her life! Her life bound up in mine; but, alas, *their* lives—I have sworn to save their lives. If I am false to that oath, I shall never dare to gaze in her eyes again. (*Aloud*) Oh, Vittoria, strive to make one great effort. You can save their lives. Marco—

Vittoria (*echoes his words*). Marco!

Stettenheim. Your brother Marco—your father—you can save their lives.

Vittoria. Their lives! How?

Stettenheim. They are going to admit you to their cell. Give this slip of paper (*takes out slip of paper*) to your father; it contains directions for opening a trap-

door, which leads by a secret staircase to a door on the canal; a gondola is in readiness. Courage, and their lives will be saved. You understand?

Vittoria. Perfectly—perfectly. (*She conceals paper in her bosom. Platten enters.*)

Stettenheim. You have not failed me, Platten?

Platten. No, here's the order (*gives paper to Stettenheim*); but there is no time to lose, the troops are now forming. I must be back to my post. (*Exit Platten.*)

Stettenheim. Come then, dearest; nay, one kiss (*kisses her*). (*Aside*) I dare not tell her that we shall not meet again on earth—their lives saved, but my death. (*Aloud*) You are ready? You will go?

Vittoria. Go! Oh, Max, I would go with you to the end of the world.

Stettenheim (*leads Vittoria towards cell, and gives order to jailor*). The order for this lady's admission to the cell, signed by the Governor of Venice.

Jailor. It is well. (*Unlocks door, but holds it closed.*) (*To Vittoria*) Are you ready? (*She flies back.*)

Stettenheim. Enter, dearest. No time to be lost.

Vittoria. You will go with me, Max?

Stettenheim. Impossible!

Vittoria. I dare not go alone! Oh, Max, when I leave you, that darkness comes over my mind—that fearful confusion returns.

Stettenheim. You must make the effort—recollect what I have said. Go, for Heaven's sake! (*He leads her to the door, jailor opens it, she enters, door is re-locked.*)

Stettenheim. Heaven grant there may yet be time. (*Roll of drums.*) Too late, too late! Alas! they must perish, then. Oh, heaven knows, though I've failed, I have done what I could to redeem my oath.

(*Roll of drums. A pause. Stettenheim exhibits great anxiety. Drummers, file of soldiers, with Platten and*

other officers, and monk, enter from bridge entrance. Soldiers take position on either side of cell door. Falkenburg enters.)

Falkenburg. Jailor, render up your prisoners. Here is the order. (*Gives paper to jailor.*) (*With impatience*) Your prisoners, I say. (*Jailor unlocks door.*)

Jailor. The prisoners are in safe custody, I'll warrant that. (*Throws open door. Vittoria stands on threshold gazing wildly round. Grimani, Contarini, and Marco appear at back.*)

Vittoria (*suddenly flying to Stettenheim*). Save me! save me! That dagger—he comes to murder me. Oh, Marco—Marco! I have loved you so. (*She falls back into Stettenheim's arms, hiding her face against his bosom.*)

Falkenburg. Let the prisoners take their places in the procession.

Contarini (*to Falkenburg*). By your leave, sir, one moment. I would speak a last word to Colonel von Stettenheim. (*Contarini, Marco, and Grimani come forward.*)

Contarini. Colonel von Stettenheim, a father, with his dying words, thanks you from the bottom of his heart for the love and care you have bestowed upon his daughter; and he dies happy, at least, in the thought that she will be honoured and protected by a brave soldier and a true gentleman. He solemnly confides her to your care. (*He lays his hand for a moment on Vittoria's averted head.*) Farewell for ever. (*Retires up the stage and falls into his place among the soldiers.*)

Marco. Colonel, promise me this. Tell her that her brother Marco—she loved so well—died loving her, and deeply repentant of that fearful blow which your hand so mercifully turned aside. Farewell! she is the precious gift we give to you, in return for your noble conduct to us since that fatal night. (*Retires up stage.*)

Grimani. Colonel, you have been a brave man, and a true. I shall die the happier for having met a noble enemy. Farewell! (*Retires up stage.*)

Falkenburg. Let the procession depart.

Platten. March. (*Roll of drums. Vittoria still remains in arms of Stettenheim. The procession advances a few yards towards door, left. Orderly enters with paper.*)

Orderly. Baron Falkenburg, this is from the Governor of Venice. It's immediate. (*Gives paper.*)

Stettenheim. A reprieve! (*Procession stops.*)

Falkenburg. No; no reprieve. (*A pause while Falkenburg reads paper.*) Good heavens! Venice is surrendered to France. (*Murmurs among the soldiers.*) Amnesty for all political offences. The prisoners are released.

Grimani. Long live Italy! free and undivided.

Contarini and Marco. Long live Italy!

Falkenburg. Ah, Count Grimani, check your exultation. It is not Venice, it is not that vile Secret Society, it is not Italy—it is Prussia which has done this. Our failure is not your triumph.

Grimani. Ah, Baron Falkenburg, we did fail at Custozza; but we held at bay that strong army of Austria which your Benedek might have hurled on Berlin.

(*Falkenburg, with gesture of impatience, goes out. Contarini aud Marco, come forward.*)

Stettenheim. Vittoria, sweet girl, happy news! Your father and brother are saved. No more cause for sorrow. Saved, to love you for ever more.

Marco. To love you, dearest sister! Oh, do not turn your eyes away from me.

Stettenheim. It is Marco who is speaking to you—the brother you loved so well when he was a little child.

Vittoria (*with dawn of returning reason*). Oh, yes,

Marco! I recollect now, we used to play together all day long. Marco! Marco!

Contarini. Merciful heaven! Grant that her mind may return!

Stettenheim. This is your father, sweet one—your father!

Vittoria. My father! Oh, yes; I remember quite well—quite well!

Stettenheim. Vittoria, you belong to them now; you are theirs. It is for them to guard and protect you. I must yield you up to a father's loving arms. (*He passes her gently to Contarini. Contarini and Marco take her hands. She smiles upon them and appears to recognize them. Then, suddenly, she turns away, and flies into the arms of Stettenheim.*)

Vittoria. No, no, Max! dearest Max! do not leave me. If you leave me, I shall die!

THE END.

LAND AND LOVE:

A STORY OF ENGLISH LIFE.

IN THREE ACTS.

CHARACTERS.

SIR FRANCIS CHEVERLEY, Baronet.
TALBOT CHEVERLEY (his son).
ANDREW GRIERSON, M.P., of "Grierson's Bank."
FRANK GRIERSON (his son).
HON. FELIX DE BEAUVOIR.
JOHN IRETON, of Molton Mills.
CALEB STERNHOLD, from the North.
BUNCE, a Gamekeeper.
BUTLER to Grierson.
GROOM.
LADY MARIAN TREVOR.
MURIEL CHEVERLEY (daughter to Sir Francis Cheverley).
STELLA GRIERSON (niece to Grierson).

Period, the Present Day.

Act I. Daybreak. With the Cubs.
Act II. Morning. With the Partridges.
Act III. Next Day. With Men and Women's hearts

ACT I.

DAYBREAK. WITH THE CUBS.

Garden front of Grierson's house. On right, set aslant, a modern picturesque seventeenth century open timbered style of house hall door, and porch, with breakfast-room at furthest angle of house (all practical). On first floor, range of bedroom windows (two practical). On left, arched entrance to stable yard. Garden plots in front of the house, trees, shrubs, seats, etc. Early morning gradually breaking into daylight, as the action of the play proceeds. Lights burning in two of the bedroom windows.

Bunce discovered seated. Enter Ireton from house, he looks about and calls to Bunce.

Ireton. Here, ho, my man!

Bunce (*coming forward*). Yes, squire.

Ireton. I'm not a squire!

Bunce. Yes, your worship.

Ireton. I'm not a worship. Which is the road to Sweetlands?

Bunce. To the right, along the turnpike, your honour.

Ireton. I'm not an honour. What's your business?

Bunce. I've just been took on as under-keeper to Squire Grierson.

Ireton. Gamekeeper?—unproductive labour!

Bunce. It's bread to me, sir.

Ireton. Unproductive labour is bread stolen out of the public pocket. If I had my will, there shouldn't be another head of game left alive in the country. Shooting is a waste of time, time is capital,—a waste of time by the individual citizen, is a fraud on the commonwealth. It's a waste of time to talk to a man who

doesn't understand the rudiments of political economy. They ought to teach political economy before the alphabet; it's bread and meat in a man's mouth! Along the turnpike, hey? Game, gamekeepers; root, and branch! (*Exit.*)

Bunce. He's a nice spoken gentleman, he is—political economy—a poor man's bread, hey?—a lean stomach, I'm a-thinking. Waste of time, indeed! It's my time to see the Squire. He's a rare good 'un, he is; no economy about him. (*Enters house*).

Frank enters from stables.

Frank (*sings*). "So we'll join the glad throng that goes laughing along, and we'll all go out hunting to-day" (*throws gravel at window*). Look alive, Stella, look alive! (*Stella opens window, she is in a riding-habit, but her hair is loose, she arranges it as she talks.*)

Stella. I am alive—dreadfully alive—at this early hour.

Frank. But ready?—ready and willing?

Stella. Willing! and all but ready.

Frank. The nags are fresh and fit; you're to ride Whitestocking, what luck for a girl! The sun's like a big red wafer, but the mists are rolling off the downs; three miles of glorious turf, and then Langton gorse, and then the hounds, Stella—what a privilege! you're only a woman, think of that—and yet you're going to see the loveliest sight in the whole world; grand, dark eyes.

Stella. If you mean girls?

Frank. I don't; hounds!

Stella. Well, I'm sure.

Frank. Don't talk to me about the depth of women's eyes.

Stella. I won't, if you talk like that.

Frank. Come along, lazy girl, long hair's a waste of time. I can't bear to miss one bit of the sight. I'm due for India next month. I love to watch them trotting along the down ridge—hounds and scarlet coats—dots to begin with—bigger and bigger every moment—life size at last—eager, breathing, panting life, all in a steam of breath round your horse's legs—and now a woman's long hair stops the way.

Stella. It's nature's doing, Frank.

Frank. Cut it off.

Stella. I shan't; it's as pretty to look at as black and tan—"a little lower than a hound." Besides, if it comes to that, sir, it wants six minutes to your own time. I won't be hurried, and I *will* drink my coffee before I start. (*Shuts window.*)

Frank. She will! She has a will, egad! It's nice to chaff Cousin Stella. Some people might think it nice to spoon Cousin Stella. I think Talbot Cheverley does think that. Talbot Cheverley. (*Sighs.*) Ah, well, keep up, my boy; Talbot is your true friend; there is hope yet, for Talbot loves you. But they're a proud lot, these Cheverleys; yesterday and to-day, is our motto; their motto is the past. (*Enter Grierson, followed by Bunce.*) Hulloa, father! are you for Langton gorse?

Grierson. Not I, my boy.

Frank. Two litters, Bunce says; we shall rattle the cubs about in rare style.

Grierson. I should like a canter this glorious morning; but I can't, Frank, if I'm to lend a hand with the partridges after luncheon. Business, hang business; but business won't be hanged. Bunce wants to know your line for to-day.

Frank. The west side, I think. Sir Francis means to join us. Let me see, Bunce, we'll take the bottom with the clover heads—Young's clover heads, I mean—

then that patch of standing barley, a wide sweep over the stubbs; the large covey is sure to go for Sidford's big swedes. By Jove! if we can just manage to drop into the middle of 'em. Have you marked the big covey, Bunce?

Bunce. In the barley, sir, sure enough this morning as I came over the hill.

Frank. Good! Eleven o'clock sharp. Tell Simmons to come on here. Black Bess, of course. And the pointers—well, bring the pointers; Sir Francis likes the old-fashioned style.

Bunce (*touching his hat*). All right, sir. (*Exit Bunce.*)

Grierson. I've given Simmons and all the keepers a caution to keep clear of poaching bothers—at least, just at present. Your Uncle Ireton is mad on the subject, with his Anti-Game Association.

Frank. Hang Uncle Ireton!

Grierson. No, Frank; I entertain more charitable views with regard to your uncle; I only want him to buy Sweetlands.

Frank. But he'll never make a country squire; it will be fire and water between his Radicalism and Sir Francis Cheverley's old Tory notions.

Grierson. Land is a great solvent of Radicalism—in short, I want him to buy, so there must be no misunderstanding with Sir Francis to divert him from the bargain. Just another word, Frank (*Frank shows impatience*), the horses won't hurt on the pillar rein for a minute, and Stella isn't ready; you are in love with Muriel Cheverley.

Frank. I am.

Grierson. A charming girl, good family; but wait awhile, my boy, you're going to India. I hate long engagements.

Frank. But, father—

Grierson. I don't want you to be engaged to Muriel

Cheverley (*Frank starts*); not now, at least; after your return, if things suit.

Frank. But I thought—

Grierson. You thought I should like an aristocratic wife for you. I have my reasons, Frank; you know I only speak firmly when I have a motive. Besides, I have a bit of pride in me; they say I'm striving for social position at any price; one may buy some things too dear. Come, if you must know one strong reason, here it is—health, I doubt her constitution. I'm a practical man, my boy; a good heart and a sound chest, birth and breed, if you will, but health first and foremost; you *must not* be engaged to Muriel Cheverley until after your return from India.

Frank. But, sir—

Grierson. Not another word. Here's Stella, now be off.

(*Stella enters from house in riding-habit.*)

Stella. Quite ready, Frank. Good morning, uncle, you're coming, I hope. I'll look after you—I mean I'll give you a lead.

Grierson (*kisses Stella*). Many thanks, my love; but I must look after your Uncle Ireton, and, after that, letters and business. (*To Frank*) Remember my injunction, Frank. (*Exit.*)

(*Frank sinks into a seat.*)

Stella. Hey-dey, I thought you were in such a hurry, "grand dark eyes," and my poor back-hair has ended in the compromise of a muddle.

Frank. Don't chaff; it's awfully serious. You know my—my regard for Muriel Cheverley.

Stella. I know you made her an offer last night.

Frank (*with surprise*). Know it!

Stella. Heard it.

Frank. You weren't asleep on the sofa, then?

Stella. I was, but I awoke; your whisper awoke me; if you had only kept on speaking loud—

Frank. You pretended to be asleep.

Stella. It was a question of deceit, or a question of breaking the thread of an avowal, an awful responsibility; it's a mercy I didn't lose my head and spoil it all. Good gracious, how my heart went pit-pat, louder than your whisper. So, Frank, you wait her answer; she's a dear girl; I shall love her so if she says "Yes."

Frank. Good Cousin Stella.

Stella. But as for you, you are a wicked humbug. "Black and tan," indeed; you wanted me to go this morning, in order that Captain Cheverley might be taken off your hands. Useful Cousin Stella.

Frank. You don't mind being useful under the circumstances?

Stella. To help you, no.

Frank. To amuse Talbot Cheverley, I mean.

Stella. I won't go.

Frank. Oh, Stella, I can't joke, it's too serious; my father forbids this engagement—at least, until I return from India. I was on the point of telling him that the offer was made last night, when you interrupted us.

Stella. What can be his objection? A charming girl, one of the best families in the county.

Frank. He doubts about her health.

Stella. "Better for worse;" a little delicate perhaps, but not bad. I've not known her more than a week, it's true, but I'm sure uncle's wrong; she tired me at lawn tennis yesterday, quite out of breath, and I'm just as strong as most young men of the present day.

Frank. But when my father gets an idea into his head—

Stella. I'll manage him, never fear.

(*Groom enters.*)

Groom (*to Frank*). From Captain Cheverley, sir. (*Gives letter, and exit.*)

(*Frank looks eagerly at envelope.*)

Stella (*with impatience*). Open it.

Frank (*with emotion*). I'm not a coward generally, but, hang me—I can't.

Stella. I will. (*Snatches letter and opens it. Reads for a moment, then with sudden movement she kisses Frank.*)

Frank. What?

Stella. Does not my kiss tell you what?

Frank. Impossible!

Stella. They are coming on here—Muriel and Captain Cheverley—we are to wait for them. It's all right, Frank. I am so glad! What's the matter? How you tremble!

Frank. Oh, Stella, it's almost too much! I dared to hope—I never dared to hope for success, and now the hope is realized. If you only knew how much I love her—worship her—that noble heart—that sweet, true nature! What can I say to her?

Stella. Never mind words; a kiss.

Frank. But my love is worship, I tell you.

Stella (*laughs*). How lovely is love!

Frank. Don't laugh, Stella. You don't know what I feel. I don't know myself; I'll be hanged if a fellow can.

Stella. Here comes your goddess; I'll be the first to kiss her. (*Muriel enters in riding-habit, on arm of Captain Cheverley; Stella hurries up to Muriel and kisses her, clasping her in her arms.*) I said I would, Cousin Muriel —the first kiss. I kissed him, when that letter came. We are all so happy. I know it's awful—you can't speak; he can't speak; I've been awake all night. Poor Frank! he's borne it all so well, chaffing me right and left—all about hounds and horses, poor boy! It will be all right when you have had a little talk together. I

know it's bad just at first. (*To Frank*) Take her, Frank. (*Frank awkwardly offers his arm to Muriel.*) No, no ; not that way (*she places his arm round Muriel's waist*). Go along, do. (*Frank and Muriel go up the stage, he speaking to her in low tones.*) Good morning, Captain Cheverley ! (*Shakes hands.*) Isn't it fearful? Poor things ! What a mercy we are here ! You know he absolutely worships her ; she's not a mere woman to him. I know what he feels : something very noble, very exalted. I can't quite explain what I mean—like being in Church, don't you know? Frank is the best fellow in all the world.

Talbot. He is—my hand on it (*presses her hand*) ; that he is.

Stella. He always reminds me of one of the true brave knights of old days.

Talbot. You're right, by Jove.

Stella. I've yet to know your sister, as I hope to know her ; but I'm sure she is worthy of all the love and honour that a chivalrous heart can give.

Talbot. Thank you, Miss Grierson. My sister is as worthy of him, as he is worthy of her. (*A pause.*)

Stella (*aside*). I can't say any more ; what on earth shall I say next. It really is too awful ! (*Aloud*) What a fine morning, Captain Cheverley !

Talbot. It is ! We ought to be off, by Jove !

Stella. Are we going?

Talbot. Of course. Wasn't it all arranged last night?

Stella. But *this* morning, just consider—

Talbot. Good riders can always spoon on horseback —I *will* see what the young hounds are made of. Besides, this morning was made for a gallop—good scent, I'll be sworn. Come on, you two. Let's be off. Now then, Muriel, what's gone with your ears?

Muriel (*leaving Frank, to Talbot*). Talbot, dear, I think, perhaps, I'd rather not go.

Frank. I think, perhaps—

Talbot. Don't begin by teaching Frank to be selfish. Can't you see Miss Grierson is dying to be off?

Stella. Oh, no, really—

Frank. I'm sure Stella don't mind.

Talbot. But I do. I won't have you give yourself airs, Muriel, because you happen to be engaged; it ought to make you all the more agreeable to other people.

Muriel (*kissing Talbot*). I'll do my best, Talbot. (*To Stella*) You'd think he was a great Turk, to listen to him; but he's a dear, kind old boy.

Talbot. No blarney; you'll want that for some one else. Go and talk to Miss Grierson; I want a word with Frank.

Muriel. Mayn't I hear?

Talbot. No, you mayn't. (*To Frank*) How's the Blair Athol filly?

(*Muriel goes to Stella, and converses.*)

Frank. Better and better every day!

Talbot (*earnestly to Frank*). I congratulate you, Frank. She's a rare bit of stuff! It isn't every man she should marry—by Jove, it isn't; but I know you, and the governor knows you, and we are awfully pleased, old boy. I say, though, you have been deuced blind, Frank. Hang it all, I've been on the point of speaking to you myself. I could see what's been ailing her, poor child; but it's all right now. She's a dear, good, true-hearted girl—a better girl never breathed, I'll swear that; and a better fellow never breathed than Frank Grierson, I'll swear that, too! Gad! it's not every man she should marry; and a fellow's sister seems different somehow from another woman. (*Aloud*) Come on, ladies! (*To*

Frank, aloud) I'll just have one look at her. In the first loose box, hey? (*To Frank, grasping his hand with fervour*) A fellow's sister, by Jove! (*Goes up towards stables with Frank. Exeunt Frank and Talbot.*)

Stella (*to Muriel*) Come, you're all right now?

Muriel. It was so good of you, just to break the ice. If I didn't love him so much, I could have spoken quite easily. Yesterday I did. But the moment he asked me to be his wife, it was all so different. I felt so dreadfully frightened. Why should I?

Stella. I don't know. The first sense of subjection, perhaps; the first idea of a lord and master; just the first cold touch of the collar; liberty lost.

Muriel. I don't mind: I hate liberty. I am so awfully happy.

Voice of Talbot outside. Gone away—forward.

Stella. We must go. Your brother is all impatience.

Muriel. You'll—I mean, you know—Frank—I want you to ride with Talbot, please.

Stella. Of course.

Muriel. For shame, it isn't that; but my horse and Talbot's never agree—riding over just now, you know.

Stella. I know. Is Frank's horse all right?

Muriel. Oh, yes; his grey agrees perfectly with my chestnut—as quiet as lambs.

Stella. That is fortunate! I'll ride with your brother.

Muriel. They have been so accustomed, you see.

Stella. I see. Don't blush.

Muriel. You must take care when you ride with Talbot.

Stella. I'll promise to take care.

Muriel. His horse, you know—

Stella (*with significance*). His horse!

Muriel. I've not frightened you?

Stella. Oh, no, not one bit.

Voice of Talbot outside. Come on, you girls, what are you lagging back for?

Muriel It's my stupid nervousness. You need never be really afraid with Talbot.

Stella. Only his horse!

Muriel. Dear, good Stella! It will be so nice! Frank and I—you and Talbot (*kisses Stella*). Come along! (*goes up.*)

Stella (*lingering for a moment*). "You and Talbot!" Well, thank goodness, love has made her blind! Talbot Cheverley! Stupid Stella!

(*Goes up, joins Muriel, and they go out together.*)

Voice of Talbot outside. Now then, come along you lazy lot!

(*Enter Lady Marion Trevor from house.*)

Lady M. That's Captain Cheverley's voice—they've started! (*Calls, looking up at window*) Felix! not up, I'll be bound—that lazy boy, the chances of life are like early worms. Felix, I say, Felix, will you answer! (*Felix opens window, he is in dressing-gown with two brushes in his hands.*)

Felix. All right, Aunt; what the deuce?

Lady M. They've started!

Felix. Let them start. Confound it; I've missed the parting.

Lady M. You've missed more than that, you've missed a ride with Miss Grierson. Come down, do.

Felix (*brushing*). I will, as soon as I get it again; confound this brilliantine!

Lady M. What's the "amoroso?"

Felix. Bond, or dozens?

Lady M. Dozens.

Felix. Eighty-four is the figure; five per cent. discount for prompt cash. Aunty, dear, you must do what you can. I've had an awful letter from Rianzares and Com-

pany, Limited; if I don't send in more orders, I shall get the sack. Try that northern barbarian with a butt—what's his name—Ireton, the Radical uncle.

Lady M. (*looking round*). Hush! Felix.

Felix. Hang it, I'm such a deuced bad hand at a bargain; he's so infernally rude and democratic.

Lady M. Never fear, we shall sell him the sherry.

Felix. How?

Lady M. Rudeness begets repentance, repentance, reparation, with a butt of amoroso as an *amende.*

Felix. Hurrah! I've hit the parting; I'll be down directly, meantime, here's our Price List (*throws List down and closes the window; Lady M. picks up List and glances over it.*)

Lady M. (*reads*). "Vintage wines"—poor boy, the blood of the Plantagenets in his veins—"specially recommended for laying down." A real, unimpeachable pedigree, which he can't sell, and pipes of port, and butts of sherry, which he can't get rid of; dear boy, and nature meant him to ride a tall horse, and rule men with a haw, haw! and a ha, ha! and a commanding aspect of ineffable hauteur—and die, maybe, in the thickest of the fight. But he spelt sympathy with an "i,"—so "haw haw!" and "ha ha!" have become useless— and he can't be permitted to die for his country, because in a flurry he mistook "i" for "y," and spelling is better than pluck! Poor Felix, born to command, and forced to bend, forced to solicit orders, and press for cash, and nature meant him to spend much, and pay little; to be a splendid gentleman, with the world at his feet, and duns at his elbow. (*Enter Felix.*) At last! Is it too late to overtake the riders?

Felix. Didn't I hear Talbot Cheverley's voice.

Lady M. Yes.

Felix. Then what's the good? he'll make the pace

with Miss Grierson; I'm not going to play second fiddle. Let's stick to this sherry question, Aunty, it's an awful business with Rianzares and Company, Limited; if the orders won't come, there's no help for it—I must take to writing; one of those literary fellows, don't you know?

Lady M. Literature! I know you are clever enough to be an author, but—oh, Felix, we have had *roués* in our family, and spendthrifts, and gamblers; I avow it with regret, but a literary man, *never*. Have patience, I'm making quite a boudoir business for you.

Felix (*with contempt*). Trade?

Lady M. Trade is the road to honour; the yard measure, not the lance! Let us review the situation.

Felix. Beggars both!

Lady M. No, Felix—rank!

Felix. It's worth nothing. I wish I could sell it.

Lady M. It's worth everything, because you can't. Why, last season it gave me a comfortable house in Mayfair, a victoria, a brougham, opera boxes, and, after all, I'm a very ordinary woman, *passé*, not particularly clever, not particularly amusing.

Felix. Aunty dear.

Lady M. I have my vanity, but I never make vanity a confidential friend. One can't live in Mayfair on a pittance, but because I was able to give to a chit of a girl, Grierson's daughter Lucy, an *entrée* to Society, I enjoyed all these advantages. Never despise your birthright, my dear boy, never talk in a profane way respecting rank. In the new world, as in the old; on the very outskirts of civilization, Colorado, or the Transvaal; democrat, republican, what you will; Burke's Peerage is a sacred book.

Felix. Not to that Mr. Ireton; nothing is sacred to

that man except a tall chimney and a cloud of smoke; he said so last night.

Lady M. Hush, Felix! *I* rejoice in Mr. Ireton; he is going to be a great friend; he is going to buy the amoroso; he is going to do far more than that, he is going to purchase Sweetlands. Listen, Felix; I mean you to be his agent for the property.

Felix. His agent—hang it.

Lady M. Estate agency is a merciful provision for younger sons, and nephews, and improvident uncles.

Felix. But how, aunty—deuce a bit, how?

Lady M. Mr. Ireton is a Republican, and I am the daughter of an earl, that's how. (*Looks round.*) Ah, in close conversation. We'll walk awhile the other way. Come, Felix. (*Exeunt Lady M. and Felix.*)

(*Enter Grierson and Ireton in conversation.*)

Ireton. I tell you, Andrew, I don't like your sherry, and I won't be bullied into saying I do; it's damned bad! And to bring things to a point, there's too much by half of your aristocracy about here, sherry and all, to please me. Say, I buy Sweetlands—

Grierson. Seriously, it will return from three to three and a quarter on the purchase-money with good management, and that's wonderfully good for land.

Ireton. Land's a luxury; I don't look for profit. But as for your old feudal system that hangs about the country like weeds, I'll root it out. Game! You shan't find a single head on the property; and as for foxes, I'll trap every one of 'em. I won't have none of your aristocrats a riding roughshod over rich capitalists. Rank! Rank should be the guinea stamp, and plenty of it. I tell you I shall *make* corn, *make* sheep, *make* turnips, just as I *make* calicoes up north. I look upon land as a factory—a machine if you like—seed corn, or rough cotton—what's the odds? You put it into a receiver,

and it comes out the required article. Why should one sort of machine make a man a Tory any more than another? You'll be a Tory, John Ireton, in six months, that's the cry up north. Ha, ha! fancy plain John Ireton a Tory squire. Let 'em try, that's all.

(*Lady Marian approaches, followed by Felix.*)

Lady M. Good morning, gentlemen.

Grierson (*turns*). Ah, good morning, Lady Marian. (*To Felix*) Good morning, Mr. De Beauvoir.

Ireton (*stiffly to Lady M.*) Good morning, *ma'am.*

Grierson. Come, I must be off to my letters; as you only arrived last night, Ireton, and don't know the place, I shall ask Lady Marian to show you over the garden before breakfast.

Ireton (*to Grierson*). Confound it, no, I say.

Grierson (*to Ireton*). All right, John; she's only an aristocrat, she won't bite. (*Exit Grierson. Felix remains quietly smoking apart, and consulting his betting-book.*)

Ireton (*aside*). If I'd known this infernal woman had been here, hang me, if I'd have come within a hundred miles of the place.

Felix (*taking out betting-book*). Fifty to one against aunt. How do I stand for the Leger?

Lady M. It will turn out a lovely bright day, Mr. Ireton. Just look at the dew on the cobwebs; isn't it lovely? Sweet place, such lovely views, miles and miles of glorious unbroken country.

Ireton. Good for picture-painters, I dare say, but it don't pay like bricks and mortar. I don't mind just a foreground, as the painters call it, with a meadow, a cow, a few trees, and a haystack, and what not; pays fairly well for villa residences; but give me a forest of chimneys on the horizon—plenty of smoke, stunted trees, and streams as black as ink. I take a practical view of the economic utility of the country to the commonwealth at

large; you can always import your corn a deal cheaper than you can grow it.

Lady M. Very true, but—

Ireton. I don't expect you to feel with me. I'm a plain speaker—plain John Ireton, that's what they call me up north—a downright thorough going Radical, root and branch.

Lady M. Indeed!

Ireton. Yes, ma'am, root and branch.

Lady M. So am I!

Ireton (*surprised*). Hey?

Lady M. Downright! Oh, Mr. Ireton, look at that poor boy, my darling nephew, the blood of the Plantagenets, recollect—

Ireton (*with curiosity*). Bless me, who'd have thought it to look at him.

Lady M. Why should he be obliged to earn his own bread? Answer me that, if you can. Oh, Mr. Ireton, there's something wrong somewhere; for years past I've said to myself, these huge fortunes which make life so expensive—people of our class can't live in London as they used to live—look at the sum one has to pay now-a-days for everything.

Ireton. Hey?

Lady M. It has been the dream of my life to meet with a downright Radical. Of course, I daren't speak openly in my own circle, but, thank Heaven, I can speak to you; I wouldn't allow any one man to possess so much money.

Ireton. I must protest a little, my dear lady; to limit the acquisition of wealth would be unsound—an economic error.

Lady M. These enormous fortunes, I mean.

Ireton. But capital, you must observe—in short, you must allow me to explain to you the laws of political

economy, which are supreme—the theory of capital, the advantages to the commonwealth of its accumulation in the hands of the individual capitalist.

Lady M. It will be so kind of you, Mr. Ireton; I shall be so much obliged.

Ireton. I shall be delighted, ma'am. (*Aside*) A most intelligent woman—none of your aristocratic pride and nonsense.

Lady M. And then, Mr. Ireton, if you would only allow me to talk to you as a practical man of business about that dear boy. I am sure you will sympathize with his social misfortunes—the victim of a law in favour of eldest sons—if I don't understand the theory of capital, I'm not wrong in saying that, am I, Mr. Ireton? I shall look upon myself as your pupil, if you're only kind enough to bear with my ignorance. In the wine trade, poor boy, a first-rate firm, noted for sherries—I observed you drank sherry last night, pardon an aunt's interest in a nephew's welfare—if at any time you should chance to want a really dry wine of nutty character, with full-bottled flavour, and silky finish. I am sure you will give him a helping hand. (*Calls*) Felix, dear. (*To Ireton*) His business memoranda, you know—wonderful business aptitudes, Mr. Ireton.

Felix (*aside*). I'm infernally wrong somewhere; hang it all, I *must* lose! (*Aloud*) I say, aunt, confound it! (*She goes to him.*) Here's this infernal outsider—hanged if I can ever lay the odds, that's what beats me.

Lady M. (*aside*). Hush! stupid boy. (*Aloud*) Felix, Mr. Ireton wishes to have one of your wine lists—I've mislaid the one you gave me.

Felix. All right. (*Aside to Lady M.*) Try to square the book up somehow—hanged if I can!

Lady M. I'll hold your *order* book, Felix (*takes betting-book from Felix*). See if you can find a list in

your pocket (*takes list from Felix*). (*To Ireton*) That is the wine you liked so much last night—the "amoroso." Your *specialité*, isn't it, Felix?

Felix. Haw! haw!

Lady M. "84," I think, per dozen; but far cheaper by the butt.

Felix. Ha! yes—hum, ha, yes!

Ireton. Oh, confound it!

Lady M. (*to Ireton*). Felix shall show you some samples. You really must see his sample case—a design of my own, in Russia leather, with his monogram and crest, just like a fashionable travelling-bag. But I'm forgetting Mr. Grierson's injunction about the garden. You won't care for the flower garden; unproductive expenditure of capital, is it not so? One can't eat roses—I'm only a scholar, remember. I'll show you the kitchen-gardens instead; such gigantic pines, and those lovely muscats! They're not contrary to political economy, are they? Commodities which are capable of being used as food for the people—of course, they are economically right? Quite so. This way (*leads Ireton*). Come Felix.

Felix. By Jove! (*follows*).

(*Sternhold enters with a small bag. He calls to Ireton.*)

Sternhold. John Ireton! John Ireton!

(*Ireton, Lady M., and Felix turn back.*)

Ireton (*surprised*). Hey, the deuce, Sternhold! (*To Lady M.*) Excuse me, ma'am, an old friend of mine and Grierson's. How are you, Caleb? (*Shakes hands with Sternhold.*) Lady Marian Trevor—Caleb Sternhold.

Sternhold. Good morning, ma'am (*bows stiffly*).

Ireton (*introducing Felix*). The Honourable Felix De Beauvoir—Caleb Sternhold.

Sternhold (*bows stiffly*). Sternhold's shirtings—India, China, the world!

Felix. Haw, yes (*nods*); hum, ha!

Ireton. Grierson will be delighted to see you!

Sternhold. He won't. Five minutes, Ireton.

Lady M. I'll get the key of the vinery. Come, Felix, we'll find Williams.

Felix (*to Lady M.*). A butt of sherry, by Jingo!

Lady M. (*to Felix*). *En attendant*, Felix, dear.

(*Exeunt Lady M. and Felix.*)

Sternhold (*solemnly*). Lady Marian, the deuce—Honourable Buttercups—plain John—what's up?

Ireton. It's all right, my man.

Sternhold. All wrong! Look at Grierson—tainted! Where's his fervour? where's his zeal? up and doing? No! Root and branch? No! Grierson don't stand straight—Tory wobbles; Liberal hundred; coercion; final remonstrance; in my pocket; repentance, or dismissal from Parliament. But Lady Marian this, Honourable Buttercups that! What's it mean?

Ireton. Never fear. That woman is a Radical to the backbone.

Sternhold. Hey!

Ireton. Her principles go beyond ours.

Sternhold. Pooh! Electoral divisions—dead level.

Ireton. She attacks capital.

Sternhold. Heavens! that woman! What, capital! corner stone of liberty! These aristocrats—nothing sacred.

Ireton. Never fear; political economy will convert her. I shall instruct her in sound principles.

Sternhold. No, Delilah! Samson, beware!

Ireton. I have fought many a hard fight.

Sternhold. With men, plain John, with men; but women? Leave her alone; back with me to the North. Leave land alone, I say; and ladies too. Building plots, if you will; but corn land and countesses? No; Squire Ireton—lost! lost!

Ireton. Never. Plain John Ireton to his life's end.

Sternhold. Amen! so be it. Won't be it—up North, I say—save yourself.

(*Enter Lady M., followed by Felix.*)

Lady M. The gardener has given me all the keys, Mr. Ireton. Perhaps your friend Mr. Sternhold will accompany us.

Sternhold (*to Ireton*). I will. Won't leave you—danger—that woman!

Lady M. The pine-apples are a perfect sight, Mr. Sternhold; and, as for the grapes—

Sternhold (*with vehemence*). Product of capital. Without capital, no pines, no grapes, nothing—a desert; with capital, everything — grey shirtings, calico, caucuses, liberty of the subject, Heavenly privileges!

Lady M. Thank you, Mr. Sternhold. Your illustrations of political economy are so clear and convincing! I'll lead the way. (*Lady M. goes out, followed by Ireton and Sternhold.*)

Felix. Butt number two, by Jove! (*Follows out.*)

(*Enter Muriel from stable-yard, followed by Frank, who speaks back.*)

Frank. Look to that cut on her fetlock– an overreach or else a flint (*following Muriel*). Tired, darling? That last canter—

Muriel. Only happy; very, very happy. Don't forget that papa wants to tell your father all about it—to break the good news. He's coming over to breakfast.

Frank. Your *new* father, Muriel.

Muriel. My new father. I think he will like me, Frank.

Frank. I'm sure, dearest. (*Aside*) He must; he will.

Muriel. And your sister, and brothers? And that dear, good cousin Stella?

Frank. All! all!

Muriel. Oh, Frank, I've been very wicked.

Frank. Nonsense.

Muriel. When I heard that Stella was coming here, to live with your father, I hated her.

Frank. What, jealous! jealous of cousin Stella?

Muriel. Awfully jealous—sick with fear and dread. I loved you so! Oh, Frank, you saw it; you must have seen it. Don't despise me! If I did betray myself, I couldn't help it. I tried so hard; indeed I did.

Frank. Betray yourself! Why, you always seemed far colder to me than to other men.

Muriel. Did I? What, cold and reserved to you?

Frank. And proud and haughty, Muriel. Sometimes I trembled when I thought of the old pedigree—twelve county members—in contrast with our family of yesterday.

Muriel. Trembled! Oh, you darling! What, you thought—you thought that I—you positively thought that perhaps I should say, "No!"

Frank. I did; indeed, I did.

Muriel. I'm so glad—so very glad. And now?

Frank. And now it's all so strange; so happy, but yet so strange. One word has made you mine. But one word might have made us strangers for evermore. One word has given me the right to live for you, to cherish and protect; to declare in all its fulness the secret of my heart—my great hope, which seemed so hopeless—my glorious ideal of a woman, far above my poor worth. And now one word has turned hope into reality, and given me the real Muriel for my own dear wife.

Muriel. Oh, Frank, the ideal was fifty times better.

Frank. No, Muriel—one can't kiss an ideal. (*Kisses her.*) I like reality best.

Muriel. So do I. I mean—I mean, I'm so happy, so very happy. (*Wipes her eyes.*)

Frank. Tears.

Muriel. Forgive them; this happiness is almost too much, but our love is great enough for tears as well as smiles. (*Looks round.*) Here's Talbot. What a bother brothers always are.

(*Talbot enters, followed by Stella.*)

Talbot. Breakfast, by gad! Come along, Miss Grierson—breakfast, or I die. (*Observing Frank and Muriel*) What the deuce! I say, none of that fiddle-de-dee till you've had something to eat, both of you. Frank, my boy, you've no business to be engaged to a girl if you can't take better care of her than that; you must make her eat. Mind me, no more spooning till after breakfast.

Muriel. Talbot, you know—

Talbot. I know you can't eat a thing, but you must; this love-making is all very well, but if it takes away your appetite, there must be an end to it. Bless you, a ride before breakfast, leave alone love and affection, is enough to make ordinary mortals as hungry as tigers. With love and affection added, gad! I could eat an elephant.

Muriel (*to Stella*). Oh, Miss Grierson—Stella, don't believe him, he loves to make himself a perfect Goth, and all the time he is such a nice, dear boy. (*Aside to Stella*) It was so good of you to keep him away from us; you managed it so beautifully when you took those hurdles on to the downs—Talbot knows when a woman can ride; and Frank and I rode down the lane together. You dear, good Stella, all for my sake.

Stella (*aside*). What an awful humbug I am! (*To Muriel*) Come, we must take off our habits. I say, it's all right now; you're not afraid of him?

Muriel. Afraid, indeed. It is such happiness, you can't imagine, Stella, dear, to tell him every little thought —to hear every thought of his. It is all so sweet. (*Kisses Stella.*)

Stella. So I have read.

Muriel. It isn't one bit like what you read.

Stella. Authors ought to know.

Muriel. Authors don't know.

Stella. That accounts for love scenes being so foolish.

Muriel. In books, Stella—only in books.

Stella. Then reality must be stranger than fiction. (*Exeunt into house.*)

Talbot. I say, Frank, she can ride, this cousin of yours—by Jove, she can!

Frank. You're right there, old fellow.

Talbot. A rare good seat—just the figure for horseback—light hand, don't worry her horse's mouth—bright and cheery, don't you know. A laugh, egad—I like a woman who can laugh. Chaff a fellow too, hanged if she can't.

Frank. You're hungry, old boy, ain't you?

Talbot. Hunger isn't the word for it.

Frank. Could you eat an elephant?

Talbot. By Jove! I (*reflects*)—I *think* I could.

Frank. I thought so. Come and try.

(*Grierson enters.*)

Grierson. Ah, Talbot, glad to see you. (*Shakes hands with Talbot.*) Where's Sir Francis? He ought to be here by this time.

Talbot. Trust my father with partridges ahead.

Grierson. Ah, keen as ever for the birds. What sport this morning?

Talbot. Not wonderful. Chopped a brace of cubs in the gorse. Pretty spin over the downs with an old fox, to ground at Knighton Wood. Bad scent; no lack of foxes, I can promise that.

Grierson. Bravo! good news for all good men and true. Breakfast is ready. Just a word, Frank, Talbot

will forgive you. (*To Talbot*) You know the line of country, hey?

Talbot. Blindfolded to the breakfast-room. (*Exit Talbot by house.*)

Grierson. Frank, an hour ago I laid a special injunction upon you—you were not to become engaged to Muriel Cheverley. There is tenfold reason now why I should repeat that injunction.

Frank. What reason, father?

Grierson. My affairs are in a very critical state. These letters just received show that things are even worse than I thought. Two years ago I was a rich man—a very rich man! this morning I stand on the brink of ruin.

Frank. What, sir—ruin?

Grierson. Ruin.

Frank. Impossible!

Grierson. On the brink. The mere flutter of a chance rumour, and all is gone.

Frank. But your manner—no one would guess—

Grierson. No one must guess; a guess, a doubt, would be fatal. Mark me, I *may* tide over, but my path is very perilous; it must be all doubt and danger for some time to come. This is why I spoke so strongly as I did this morning. I wanted to save you from all entanglement in case the worst comes. This is why I speak openly now; that threatened engagement with Muriel has forced me to reveal to you this terrible anxiety—to make you my partner in this momentous affair.

Frank. Oh, my God, father!

Grierson. Look at me, Frank—nerves of steel. What I am, you must be also, or all is lost. You have your part to play—you are bound for foreign service; you must go; a few months hence, with a turn of the

market, all may be right; but if the worst does come, I shall have saved you and her.

(*Sir Francis enters from house, followed by Muriel.*)

Grierson (*turning to Sir Francis*). Ah, Sir Francis.

Sir Francis. Hullo, Grierson! (*They shake hands.*) Glorious morning.

Grierson. Made for sport.

Sir Francis. Sport, hey? All sorts of sport. Gad! I hope I'm first; I wanted to be first. Come along, Muriel. Here's your new daughter, Grierson; you didn't know it, did you? Frank, you rascal, you know I wanted to be the first to tell your father. All right, I see by your surprise Frank has kept the secret.

Grierson (*to Frank*). Is this really so?

Frank (*to Grierson*). I made the offer last night. (*A short pause.*)

Grierson (*suddenly*). Muriel, my darling, a thousand welcomes from your new father. (*Kisses Muriel, clasping her in his arms.*) Bless you, my dear child—bless you both.

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

MORNING—WITH THE PARTRIDGES.

SCENE *as in Act I.*

Talbot and Frank discovered smoking; Felix smoking, Lady Marian standing at his side with betting-book in her hand. Two gamekeepers, two beaters, with retriever, and brace of pointers at the stable arch.

Lady M. (*to Felix*). What a book. Oh, Felix.

Felix. Oh, aunt, deuced bad!

Lady M. Bad! Must lose—must—I must pay. My

diamond cross—my great grandmother. No matter, I never saw her, only her portrait. "Sir Joshua," or I should never have seen that.

Felix. I'm a fool!

Lady M. No, the art of betting is one of nature's special gifts. Many of nature's most gifted children have been denied this gift. Philosophers, poets, statesmen, even divines, and yet without the slightest capacity for betting. Now to business. Mr. Ireton is going to buy Sweetlands out of sheer obstinacy, and you are going to manage the estate for him as his agent.

Felix. What, settled, aunt?

Lady M. *I* am going to settle it, Felix.

Felix. But perhaps he—*his* estate, you know—

Lady M. Results depend on the way things are put; if you know how to put a thing, the end becomes a foregone conclusion. To my task. (*Exit.*)

Felix. Put a thing. By Jove! I always put my foot in everything. (*Looks over betting-book.*)

Talbot (*rises from garden seat*). We must be moving, my boy.

Frank. Lots of time. Finish your weed, Talbot.

Talbot. Time, business, I say—birds I mean. Luncheon, hey? Down Barn, Frank; girls can drive up.

Frank. Better work back here for luncheon; we shall be within a mile of the house all the morning.

Talbot. Good!

Frank. Just give a look at the grey; nasty cut this morning; lame, I'm afraid.

Talbot (*to Felix*). Frank, wants to do us; spooning, not sport.

Frank. No, honour bright! only a word with the Guv., and then we'll start. (*To keeper*) The Spreadoaks, Simmons—we shall be there directly. (*Exeunt keepers, dogs, etc.*)

Talbot. We shan't make a big bag, that's clear; love's no hand with a gun; bows-and-arrows, if you like. Come on, De Beauvoir.

Felix (*following, putting betting-book in his pocket*). Hum, hum, my foot in everything. (*Exeunt by stables.*)

Frank. Honour bright! Light words when honour was bright. I've never had to think about honour till now. All *was* honour; and now—*now* that the best and truest girl loves me, gives her precious life into my keeping—honour bright—no, honour tarnished. (*Sits. Grierson enters, places his hand on Frank's shoulder. Frank looks up, then starts to his feet.*) Father, what's it all mean? You say you stand on the brink of ruin, and yet you accept this engagement—accept Muriel as my wife; it must be some dream, some delusion.

Grierson. No dream; the danger is very real. A faltering step, and I am lost. Mark my words, Frank, I am lost—*we* are lost!

Frank. But Muriel? I will never marry her with this disgrace hanging over our head. Not another hour, not another minute, I say—Sir Francis shall know. (*Grierson arrests Frank's movement.*)

Grierson. Remember, I tried to spare you—warned you this morning, solemnly warned you; and now I don't ask you to marry her, but I *command* you to remain engaged. Let us be reasonable men. Your regiment is first on the rooster for India, you expect your orders every day. Under ordinary circumstances you could exchange, retire from the service, but now that the chances of war stare us in the face—active service in the field—you cannot, I say, as a soldier, leave the army at such a moment. No woman could ask a man to sacrifice his honour.

Frank. His honour!

Grierson. His honour, I repeat. The course is plain

enough. You cannot retire at this juncture; your marriage must wait till the chance of war is at an end.

Frank. And then?

Grierson. And then the crisis in my affairs will have passed—ruin or safety, the engagement broken off, or your marriage, as I hope—well, against hope.

Frank. What right have we to stoop to such dissimulation?

Grierson. Dissimulation, no. An excuse—a very colourable excuse—why, life, the business of life, could never be carried on—

Frank. The business of life!

Grierson. Ay, the business of life. Look you, Frank, you have never seen business, its necessities. I've worked very hard; I've passed through, ay, agonies of suspense ere now, when you were all young children; I've done the work; I'm not ashamed; hundreds of respectable, honoured men have done the same; and this money enabled me to raise all you children, to place your course of life in pleasant paths far away from my world—Eton, you know; and then among true gentlemen, Sir Francis, Talbot, paths of honour; but my business did it; my money saved you from all need of petty meanness, of dissimulation. This money—have I spared it when it could save you from difficulty or temptation?

Frank (*moved*). Father!

Grierson. So, only the engagement—only engaged, I say. But the slightest breath of suspicion, and all's at an end for ever—your marriage, your happiness, your two brothers at Oxford, your sister's pending marriage—Stella—all—all! These are the hard responsibilities of life, my boy. Would to Heaven I could have spared you, but side by side we must weather the storm together.

(*Talbot, followed by Felix, with betting-book in his hand, enters from stable entrance.*)

Talbot. The grey's all right. Just a water bandage, that's all. We're getting our party together. Now we can make a start of it.

Grierson. Not till after luncheon, as far as I'm concerned. And Frank, you see—

Talbot. No excuses for Frank. He's got none of these business cares, though I'll be hanged if love doesn't seem just as bad. (*To Frank*) Cheer up, old boy, you'll soon get used to it (*taking Frank's arm*). I've got you now; Muriel or no Muriel, I don't mean to let you go. Let's get hold of our shooting irons, and make a start of it. Come on, De Beauvoir, look alive, man. (*Talbot goes out, with Frank on his arm.*)

Felix (*downcast*). It's no good, wine or turf, I can't square it anyhow. Literature—it must come to that, and quickly too. (*Exit, following Talbot and Frank.*)

Grierson (*looking after Frank*). Poor boy, till to-day no thoughts for the morrow. Frank, in name and nature, intolerant of meanness and deceit, and sordid money-getting thoughts. My son, a gentleman, a man of chivalry and honour; that was my dream, the dream is realized, the product of my money; those hot-house plants, rare, beautiful; without money their beauty would never have been revealed—hedge-side weeds mid wind and rain. Better, maybe, had I been more niggardly in the cultivation of that fine germ—less honour, less sorrow. Poor Frank, poor Frank! (*Enter Stella and Muriel.*) Well, ladies, the pony carriage is at your disposal if you care for a drive to the Down Barn and a peep at the sport.

Muriel. Thanks!

Stella. Uncle dear, Sir Francis is waiting for you. We have left him, with the *Times*, in your study.

Grierson. I'll join him. (*Aside*) Settlements, I suppose. I must be very liberal. (*Exit.*)

Stella. Where are these truants, I wonder?

Muriel. Frank's no business to go without telling me.

Stella. Tyrant!

Muriel. A fearful tyrant! Oh, Stella, it is so delightful, this tyranny of mine.

Stella. With one subject—a slave!

Muriel. But he enjoys it. It is so nice for him. Just think—half a word, a thought almost, and this man is at my feet. It's too awfully delightful.

Stella. I call it wonderful.

Muriel. Delicious, Stella!

Stella. Wonderful, I repeat. Very wonderful, when one thinks what a lot of girls there are in the world—pretty girls, too; and yet a man is content to give up his liberty and his fortune to one girl. Frankly, from my knowledge of girls, I don't think we are worth the bargain, I don't, indeed—settlements, diamonds, trousseau, lawyers, three parsons into the bargain—all that money, and all that fuss—and just a lace veil, a wreath, and a mere girl underneath—that's all!

Muriel. Hush, Stella, do.

Stella. No matter what I say; it's what men believe, best luck for us girls!

Muriel. But if men once heard you?

Stella. They wouldn't heed—the delusion is very old. It will last our time, Muriel, dear. Have faith! Three parsons! Here's Frank.

(*Enter Frank, hurriedly.*)

Frank. I've left Talbot at the paddock. Just good-bye. He's so impatient to get off!

Muriel. He's had shooting enough this season, in all conscience.

Frank. But you know—

Muriel. Frank, dear.

Frank. Yes, darling.

Muriel (*whispering*). Tell Stella to tell Talbot—

Frank. All right. I say, Stella, just tell Talbot that I shan't shoot till after luncheon. He's to go on with De Beauvoir.

Muriel. There's a dear, good Stella—if you don't mind.

Stella. I delight in being useful—the blessed privilege of spinsters. (*Exit Stella.*)

Muriel. She don't mind. I don't think she hates Talbot. Wouldn't it be nice? Come along, Frank; I say—

Frank. Yes, dearest.

Muriel. Let's get out of this hot sun—the lime walk, I think.

Frank. Damp, eh?

Muriel. Never mind. That delicious dappling of light and shade on green moss; everything seems so beautiful now. Since this morning, the world looks quite new—another world. (*Looking in his face*) Why! what? A tear! It's just what I feel, I could cry with happiness—light and shade, but always our love. Oh, Frank! always our love. (*Exeunt.*)

(*Enter Talbot, followed by Stella.*)

Talbot (*calling*). Here, ho, Frank! You must come. De Beauvoir has been carried off by his aunt. Why, there they go! It's too bad of Muriel—a deuced sight too bad.

Stella. You must make excuses for love, Captain Cheverley.

Talbot. So I do, when it don't interfere with pleasure. Such a splendid day, confound it; birds like stones. I hate shooting by myself.

Stella. I'm sorry I don't shoot.

Talbot. So am I—Diana did.

Stella. Modern young ladies don't.

Talbot. Why not?

Stella. I don't know.

Talbot. Diana was awfully correct, and all that sort of thing—a sworn spinster, by Jove!

Stella (*aside*). That's just the reason, but I can't tell him so. (*Aloud*) I don't know, indeed, Captain Cheverley; I haven't the slightest idea. It's no use bothering about Diana; I'll see if I can find Frank instead.

Talbot. Thanks (*sits*). I wish you would; it's an awful bore this hanging about with no one.

Stella. I'm so sorry for you.

Talbot. I mean some companion—some fellow, don't you know, to talk to.

Stella. I'll do my best to find you a companion, Captain Cheverley. (*Exit.*)

Talbot (*reflecting*). Why, hang it, she is a companion—a deuced nice companion, too; and I'm sending her away. (*Aloud*) I say, Miss Grierson!

Stella (*answering outside*). Yes, Captain Cheverley.

Talbot. She'll come back. By Jove! old boy, what are you up to? If she does come back, it's all over with you for life. Hang it all—Norway, salmon—North America, buffaloes. (*Stella enters, but he does not perceive her.*) A wife—home, nothing but home. Hate home—deuced slow! I *must* kill a buffalo before I die—no, hang it!

Stella. You called, Captain Cheverley?

Talbot. Did I? No.

Stella. Oh, yes; certainly. I'm sure I heard you.

Talbot. I beg your pardon, then—

Stella. I saw them the instant you called, in the lime walk—just here, you know. It was such a pretty picture. Your sister looked so sweet and so happy—half in shade

and half in light—leaning on his arm; and Frank, you know—I mean—I—I— (*Very confused.*)

Talbot. Yes, what about Frank?

Stella. Oh, nothing. I can call Frank in a moment, if you like.

Talbot. Never mind.

Stella. Oh, yes, but I can; it's no trouble!

Talbot. We'd better leave them alone.

Stella. But they're coming. Look! In another minute, you'll be able to carry off Frank, and then you'll be happy. A companion—some fellow to talk to.

Talbot. Perhaps we'd better not disturb them. I say, you won't mind walking with me?

Stella. Instead of some other fellow?

Talbot. Just so. Only a short way (*she hesitates*). Not through the turnips, of course.

Stella. I don't mind turnips one bit.

Talbot. Don't you?

Stella. Any amount of turnips.

Talbot. But the dew—awfully wet, you know.

Stella. Pshaw! I'm not made of salt, indeed.

Talbot. By Jove! (*Aside*) Those turnips will settle it—I'm done for. (*Aloud*) I say, come along, or else they'll see us. It will bother them so. Here, round by the stables. This way, Miss Grierson.

Stella (*aside*). Good gracious, how my heart beats. I haven't got one bit of strength. My feet won't move.

Talbot. Quick; they're coming. What's the matter?

Stella. Oh, nothing! My boot—the lace, I think.

Talbot. Let me. I'm not the best hand at tying a knot. (*About to stoop.*)

Stella. Oh, no, thanks—only a stone. (*Aside*) This is too awful.

Talbot. Hey? Sit down, then. Here.

Stella. It's all right, it was only fancy. (*Aside*) I think I shall die.

Talbot. Quick, take my arm, we must run for it.

Stella. Thank you, Captain Cheverley. (*Takes his arm.*) *Any* amount of turnips. (*Exeunt running.*)

(*Enter Frank and Muriel.*)

Frank. You see, darling, we are under positive orders to sail in a month from to-day.

Muriel. I see that. But then you know, Frank, dear, a month is four weeks, remember that, and four weeks—

Frank. Is a very short time at best, Muriel. But your father—we ought to think of your father—we must think of your father—taking you away all in a moment, and so far away.

Muriel. I know I ought to think about papa. (*A pause.*) Why, you would go away to India by yourself, and I, here, all by myself, alone. (*Cries.*) But, Frank, soldiers' wives go abroad with their husbands every day; it's their duty, you know.

Frank. Things are so uncertain just now; if we were sure of going straight to India, but we may stop here or there—Malta, Constantinople, Egypt – Heaven knows where. I'm sure your father wouldn't allow it, Muriel; darling, if I thought your health could stand all this roughing.

Muriel. I should be very well, quite well, I'm sure. Oh, Frank, to think of your being so far away. I can't bear it, I can't, indeed.

Frank. Dear Muriel, I fear it must be—indeed, it must be for a short time. A year—well, less than a year.

Muriel. No. no, Frank, I can't, I won't. If I can't go with you, I'm ready to go, ready to brave anything with you; I say, if I can't go with you, you must stay with me.

Frank. Give up my profession?

Muriel. Men do it every day when they are engaged to be married.

Frank. Can I throw up my commission at this time?

Muriel. Why not?

Frank. We stand on the brink of a great war; every man may be needed—every soldier certainly. At this moment, I desert Queen and country.

Muriel. Oh, Frank, I feel what you mean—your honour!

Frank (*with bitterness, clasping his hands over his face*). My honour, my honour! (*Aside*) If she only knew the torture of that word.

Muriel (*with fervour*). I yield, darling Frank, I yield. A soldier's affianced bride, if not a soldier's wife. I will be brave; you shall go, you *must* go; I will wait for God's good time, patiently without repining.

Frank. Brave, noble girl. (*Aside*) Liar! liar!

Muriel. Kiss me, Frank. One kiss—one kiss to give me fortitude and strength. Frank, dear, don't turn away, you said I was brave. (*He kisses her with effort.*) Not lips, heart, heart; something holds back your heart. What is it? Oh, Frank, what is it?

Frank. For Heaven's sake, Muriel—

Muriel. But I feel—oh, darling, I feel—I am sure some cold shade stands between your heart and mine.

Frank. Muriel, not such cruel words. If you only knew how much I love you. Yes, well, some cold shade—the thought of our separation.

Muriel. Forgive me, Frank. (*Aside*) Fool that I am. But Stella, Stella—when Stella is engaged to Talbot, I shall have no more fear.

(*Sir Francis and Grierson enter.*)

Muriel (*goes up to Sir Francis*). Well, papa. (*He kisses her, then looks into her face.*)

Sir Francis. Hey-day, pet. What, tears!—tears on the first day of an engagement?

Muriel. Frank has been telling me that his regiment is under orders to sail in a month.

Sir Francis. Well?

Muriel. Of course, Frank must go; it is his duty.

Sir Francis. Of course it is; I'm an old soldier myself.

Muriel. Well, that was the cause of the tears.

Sir Francis. Pooh, but you'll go too. What! leave your husband?

Muriel. Frank says it wouldn't do for me to go. All this uncertainty about war; he's sure you wouldn't allow it.

Sir Francis. You babes in the wood. Whilst you have been crying and fretting, two older heads have been settling everything; hey, Grierson?

Frank (*starts*). Father!

Grierson. Yes, yes, my boy, Sir Francis and I.

Muriel. What, papa, you don't object to my marrying in this sudden way?

Frank. But, Sir Francis!

Sir Francis. You think me an unnatural father, hey, Frank? Gad, my boy, you're half right; it would have gone hard against the grain to have given up this girl of mine so suddenly, but—

Frank. All this uncertainty as to my movements. Muriel's health is not strong, remember. (*To Grierson*) Father, I'm sure we feel—I'm sure I ought to feel—

Sir Francis. You're a good fellow, Frank, a right good fellow; you argue against yourself, because you think it's for Muriel's good. But the fact is, Dr. Beauchamp says—there's no cause for alarm; but Dr. Beauchamp advises, if possible—not absolutely necessary, but if possible—a warm climate for Muriel this winter. I

say, there's nothing to be alarmed about; your father has read Dr. Beauchamp's letter, Muriel is as healthy and sound, thank God, as any of us; but a warm climate, if possible. Well, a warm climate would be death to me, they say. Talbot's movements are just as uncertain as yours. Malta would suit perfectly.

Frank. But war! If I am ordered away?

Sir Francis. Our cousin, Lady Seafield, is at Malta. Muriel couldn't be in safer hands. Anyhow, Muriel can't do better than go with you. Give me your hand, Frank. (*Takes Frank's hand.*) Never forget what I'm going to say. I give you this darling child of mine, my happiness, my joy, my pride; to be your happiness, joy, and pride; to be her husband: to be her father, when I am no more, to love her with all the tenderness and love of the mother she has lost. And I do this, Frank, with perfect confidence, because I know that you are a true, honourable, English gentleman, that the life she has lived at home with us, she will live with you her husband. And now be very happy both of you, and then I shall be very happy. Come, Muriel, you shall go and lie down a little. I'll take her to the house; a little rest, Frank, and she'll be all right.

Muriel (*to Frank*). I'm quite happy now, Frank, quite happy.

(*Sir Francis and Muriel retire up stage; Stella, her boots and skirt wet and muddy, enters to them. They converse.*)

Frank (*to Grierson*). You said engaged, not married.

Grierson (*to Frank*). What could I do? Dr. Beauchamp's letter.

Frank (*to Grierson*). At any cost, some excuse—some excuse, I say.

Grierson (*to Frank*). What excuse? What possible excuse? There was more in that letter; her love for

you; the worry of some love affair, Dr. Beauchamp said, was plainly the secret of her state of health.

Frank (*to Grierson*). Heaven help me.

(*Sir Francis comes down, leaving Muriel and Stella upstage.*)

Sir Francis. Your cousin will look after her, Frank. Gad, the care of that child these years past has made me an old woman; and now we'll have a look at the birds. What the deuce is the matter with Talbot? No birds, hey, Grierson? I've not heard his gun. Come along, Frank; show us some sport. (*Takes Frank's arm and hand.*) Hand trembles! Gad, my boy, so does mine; but it's joy, Frank, joy. We'll knock down the birds, right and left, my old style, hey?

Grierson. This way, Sir Francis; I think Talbot is in the big swedes.

(*Exeunt, Sir Francis on Frank's arm. Stella and Muriel come down.*)

Stella. Going away with him? I am so glad. It would have been too awful for you to be separated. But your trousseau; how can you manage?

Muriel. Anyhow.

Stella. Anyhow? A trousseau! It seems like part of the marriage service.

Muriel. The dressmaker, the marriage service?

Stella. The dressmaker and the parson, I always join them together; I can't help it. And the confectioner, very solemn!

Muriel. What! everything in dozens, and endless dresses, big trunks, and an indigestible cake?

Stella. More solemn and binding. I don't know why, but it does; and people always do it.

Muriel. But Frank don't mind—

Stella. Young men are always ready to scoff at sacred things. Now come; Sir Francis says you must lie down; rest a bit.

Muriel. I must talk; I shall die, if I don't talk. I feel so happy; I feel so sad. Oh, what an awful thing love is!

Stella. It is.

Muriel. You don't know.

Stella (*aside*). Don't I?

Muriel. To marry Frank, to leave papa; selfishness and duty, duty and selfishness. I'm all of a maze. Love is a great bother, Stella; it would be much better if girls had nothing to do with it.

Stella. That's precisely my opinion.

Muriel. I say you know nothing about it; you've never tried. (*Suddenly*) Why, Stella, how pale you look! What's happened? Why, you're all wet. (*Feels her dress.*) Your boots, too; where have you been?

Stella. Only the turnips—

Muriel. What! Talbot?

Stella. Captain Cheverley asked me. Mr. De Beauvoir was suddenly carried off by his aunt. Your brother asked me, you see—

Muriel. Yes.

Stella. If I should mind walking with him a little way, just as a companion, don't you know?

Muriel (*with impatience*). Well, well—

Stella. As we were walking through the turnips—

Muriel. Yes—the turnips.

Stella. Your brother said something in a very low tone.

Muriel. What did he say?

Stella. I don't know; I don't, indeed. A covey rose at our feet—whir! whir!

Muriel. But you heard what he said?

Stella. I only heard the keeper shout, "Mark! mark those birds!"

Muriel. But surely Talbot said something.

Stella. I heard him say just one naughty word when the birds flew away. It was such a splendid covey. Somehow, he had forgotten to load; that's all I heard. Oh, by the bye, the keeper said another naughty word.

Muriel. Naughty word! It was an offer, you goose.

Stella. I keep telling you, I never heard; I ran out of the turnips as fast as I could.

Muriel. But you felt?

Stella. I felt as if I were half flying, half running.

Muriel. Then of course it was an offer!—when Frank, you know—it was like sitting on clouds. Oh you darling Stella, I am so glad (*kisses Stella*), sister Stella, not cousin Stella; sister Stella now. Come, you must change your dress, and those awful boots.

Stella. Too awful. I'll never walk through those dreadful turnips again.

Muriel. Never?

Stella. Once through turnips is quite enough in a woman's life. (*Exeunt arm-in-arm.*)

(*Enter Ireton, Sternhold, and Lady Marian.*)

Ireton. Pounds, my lady.

Sternhold. Pounds, ma'am.

Lady M. Guineas, I think. (*Looks at list.*) Guineas, I'm right. Thank you so much. His own bread, poor boy. The wine shall be duly forwarded. (*To Ireton*) I really must congratulate you on Sweetlands. Magnificent trees!

Ireton. Unproductive commodities!

Lady M. But timber, surely—

Ireton. Cheaper to import—Norway, Canada—doors, sashes—half the price—I shall grub them up—hedgerows, ditches, little trumpery fields—the four-course system for me—wire fences, four great fields on my estate, that's all—steam culture, nothing but steam.

Sternhold. Steam's the only culture.

Lady M. So I perceive. A few horses, I suppose, Mr. Ireton.

Ireton. No, my lady, coal is cheaper than corn, and engines more tractable than horses. Tramways through every field—

Lady M. Magnificent conception!

Ireton. Takes away your breath?

Lady M. Almost; but still, I've long thought that agriculture requires original treatment—tenant farmers half-ruined, farms without tenants.

Ireton. Factories, not farms, that's the cure.

Sternhold. Capital, ma'am, capital, combined with chemistry; that's the way to treat land.

Lady M. Always plenty of acid, no doubt.

Ireton. Mark me, my lady; none of your land agents and bailiffs, with their old-fashioned, bigoted feudal notions about farming—

Lady M. Quite so. I thoroughly understand the sort of person you require; a person with a certain general knowledge of land, rotation of crops, etc., etc., but not wedded to obsolete systems; in short, a young man entirely without prejudices, ready and willing to apply your ideas to his agricultural knowledge.

Ireton. The very man, if I could only find him.

Lady M. I flatter myself I know him.

Ireton. Do you really?

Lady M. Oh yes; my nephew Felix.

Ireton. The deuce!

Sternhold. The devil!

Lady M. That is, of course, if I can persuade him to throw up his lucrative chances in the wine trade. From his childhood he has lived in the country; he has imbibed a thorough knowledge of agriculture from his cradle; but, at the same time, he has never dealt with agriculture as a definite pursuit: he is, consequently,

absolutely unwedded to systems. Not another word; I'll sound him on the subject. Why, here he is, Felix dear. (*Felix enters.*) The victim of feudality, Mr. Sternhold. Oh, Mr. Ireton, let him be the pioneer of your enlightenment. (*Lady M. goes up to Felix, and converses.*)

Sternhold. Land agent! that booby? Hyde Park—hundreds of 'em—eye-glasses—empty heads—Rotten Row. What's the good of 'em? Who feeds 'em? Who clothes them?

Ireton. Unproductive expenditure of capital. Confound that woman! If I get into a rage, it's no good; if I try to talk her down, to argue with her, it's no good. I can say "no" to other men and women, but that confounded smile of hers—

Sternhold. Butter and sugar! Plain John, beware!

(*Lady M. returning with Felix.*)

Lady M. (*to Ireton*). I congratulate you—Felix consents. I feel that this is the end of the feudal system, and the commencement of a new era of agricultural progress. Mr. Grierson's carriage will drive us round the property—Felix will be invaluable—I will lead the way. (*Aside to Felix*) Felix, dear, a provision for life.

(*Enter Grierson, hurriedly.*)

Grierson (*to Ireton*). What on earth have you been saying to Sir Francis? After breakfast, I mean.

Ireton. Not a single head of game—

Sternhold. Burning principle!

Grierson. It has burnt your fingers. He utterly refuses to accept you as a neighbour. He declines any further negociations as to the sale of that property—the best chance you ever had of buying a good residential property at a cheap rate.

Ireton Confound it!

Sternhold. Bless it! Good quittance—salvation up North!

Lady M. (*to Ireton*). Oh, Mr. Ireton, pray allow me to talk to Sir Francis.

Ireton. No, my lady. I accept the decision.

Sternhold. Bravo! Saved!

Ireton (*to Grierson*). I shall withdraw that purchase-money forthwith.

Grierson (*vehemently*). Of course, of course! Why do you trouble to mention the matter? Of course!

Lady M. Oh, Mr. Ireton, would that I had been present at that unfortunate discussion. Poor Felix! The destruction of the feudal system would have been his bread.

Ireton (*aside*). And my butter. (*Aloud*) Never fear, my lady; his knowledge of agriculture. Farewell! As Sir Francis takes this high tone, I shall leave at once.

Sternhold. At once. Plucked from the fire!

Lady M. (*to Ireton*). I shall never forget this day. Your presence has been a political and commercial revelation. Must all this good teaching end?

Ireton. Must, my lady. Good-bye!

Sternhold. Good-bye!

Ireton (*to Sternhold*). My teaching! my teaching! (*With emotion*) Sternhold, I have saved that woman from latent communism.

Sternhold (*to Ireton*). Pooh! You have saved yourself from being a fool. Delilah! Henceforth, high politics, bracing air, your native smoke. (*Exeunt Ireton and Sternhold.*)

Felix. By Jove! By Jove!

Lady M. Don't despair. Felix, dear, you've still got your boudoir business to fall back upon. (*Exeunt to house, Felix and Lady M.*)

Grierson (*throwing himself on a seat*). That thirty thousand gone—withdrawn from the bank, perhaps to-day, in a day or so at most—and then nothing short of

a miracle can tide me over. (*Servant passes at back of stage.*) (*In ordinary tone*) Johnson, order my brougham. I shall want Thomas—no, tell Roberts he's to drive me in to the bank after luncheon.

Servant. Yes, sir. (*Exit.*)

Grierson. Is it worth the cost, this climbing the social ladder? If nothing had been lost—no money, no honour lost—what should I have gained? Is social inanity worth this cost? And yet in this mad game, I have ventured name, reputation, liberty itself; pawned my honour, little by little, to hold the steps I have gained; ventured on rash investments to make up a splendid income. These children of mine, for whom I have risked so much—a curse, not a blessing from their lips; their sense of highest honour the product of my money, of my sin—the sting of that curse, the double sting! Pooh, pooh, fool! pull yourself together. Cool and calm to the end. Fight it out, Andrew Grierson, fight it out.

(*Enter Frank.*)

Frank. Father, it's all in vain, I can bear this infamy no longer. I must, I *will* tell Sir Francis.

Grierson. And then?

Frank. What do you mean?

Grierson. He will ask the reason.

Frank. Then he must know the true reason. He will respect it, as a man of honour.

Grierson. He will withdraw his account. Your Uncle Ireton has had a foolish wrangle with Sir Francis about game. Sir Francis declines to let him have Sweetlands. The thirty thousand pounds purchase-money standing at the bank to your uncle's credit will shortly be withdrawn. If, in addition to this, Sir Francis withdraws his own account; if he whispers or hints to other friends that perhaps they had better follow his example

—aye, it needs but a small crevice, and the waters of distrust quickly undermine credit, and the fabric goes.

Frank. Beggars, but honest! I will not marry Muriel, be the cost what it may.

Grierson. You *will* marry Muriel; because you *must.*

Frank. No, I say—

Grierson. You *must!* Mark me, if the bank fall through this rash, cruel act of betrayal, your name—you wring the truth from me—stands blasted for ever.

Frank. Father!

Grierson. Your father a felon in the dock—(*Frank sinks down into a chair*)—securities that I hold for others, trust funds, disposed of—sold.

Frank. Oh, father, you kill me with this horror.

Grierson. No, save you; *perhaps*, save myself. I am forced to tell the terrible truth right out, because I am forced to seal your lips. We may still be saved by silence. Take your choice, Frank. Marry that girl, or place me in the felon's dock; destroy me, destroy your own name, destroy your sister and brothers—and let their curse be on your head. As for me, I am very sick at heart, tired of this empty, miserable world, tired of the battle; but I must think of them. I need every atom of force: calm head, full power of nerve, and here at my own home, those of my own house, my own son—

Frank. Father, I would die to save you from shame.

Grierson. Aye, aye, that were easy. You would do everything but the one thing I ask. Well, take your course—take your course, I say; but, henceforth, no more allusions to this subject. Betray me, if you will; but talk no more. Leave me in peace, to fight it out as best I can. (*Sir Francis enters.*) Ah, Sir Francis, I have been thinking that matter over. I wish you would give me leave to renew the purchase question with my brother-in-law.

Sir Francis. You must forgive me, Grierson; but my mind is made up. Here's something satisfactory. My solicitors have received the purchase-money for the Worcestershire farm that Talbot and I agreed to sell—a short ten thousand pounds. They ought to have paid it in to my account at your bank, instead of sending me a cheque. I shall forward it to your manager.

Grierson. I am going to drive in directly. I will take charge of it.

Frank (*aside to Grierson*). Don't take it, father. For God's sake, don't take it!

Sir Francis (*to Frank*). That ten thousand pounds is Muriel's portion. Your good father has promised to treble it.

Grierson. Yes, yes, Sir Francis—be the sum what it may.

Sir Francis. Forty thousand pounds won't be a bad start in life. Hey, Frank?

Grierson. Certainly not! Luncheon ought to be ready. At any rate, I must be off. Come, Sir Francis.

Sir Francis. With all my heart. (*Exeunt Sir Francis and Grierson.*)

Frank. The circle of infamy closes round me—a wife who will despise me—a wife whose contempt will cleave to me to the end of life—an old man who has loved me like a son. Did I know it? They'll ask, did I know this dreadful wrong? If I try to lie, broken stammering words will reveal the truth. That ten thousand pounds! my father shall restore it—how? somehow, I swear.

(*Stella enters.*)

Stella (*with telegram*). This telegram has just come.

Frank (*opens telegram and reads*). "From the Adjutant; Inspection to-morrow morning—the Duke is coming over from Aldershot." I must catch the three o'clock

express for Portsmouth. I shall be back to-morrow afternoon.

Stella. What a bore for you, I am so sorry. Where's uncle?

Frank. I don't know—with Sir Francis.

Stella (*with sudden exclamation*). Oh, Frank—dear Frank—he's—Talbot—Captain Cheverley—he's—he's—

Frank. What?

Stella. What! Don't you see? Can't you feel? Can't you tell? He's made me an offer!

Frank. Merciful heaven!

Stella. It's true, quite true! I keep saying to myself it's quite true. I can't believe it—that noble, splendid true-hearted Talbot has made me, Stella Grierson—a poor, stupid, foolish girl—an offer.

Frank. You have accepted him?

Stella. Not absolutely! But of course I have in reality —not in words, but he knows I have. I said I must speak to my uncle first.

Frank. Thank heaven for that!

Stella. Why for that?

Frank. Because you can still say, "no"—

Stella. But I mean to say yes—fifty yesses.

Frank (*starts up*). No, by Heaven! she shall not suffer the torture that I suffer. I will save her from that misery.

Stella. Misery? and you are engaged to the girl you love.

Frank (*sits and takes Stella's hand*). Stella, I know what you are; from childhood, I have known that—a true, brave, noble girl; and now a true, brave, noble woman—you cannot save me, but, thank God, I can save you. This is an awful secret, but I know the secret will be inviolable in your breast. Your uncle, my father, stands at this moment on the brink of ruin and shame.

Stella. Oh, Frank, impossible!

Frank. Too true—too true.

Stella. But Sir Francis? Muriel? Do they know this?

Frank. No, they must never know it—never know it, I say, it would be worse than ruin if they did.

Stella. And you—*you*, my cousin Frank—*you* are going to marry Muriel.

Frank (*in low tone*). I am, I must—if I don't die first.

Stella (*with contempt*). You, a man of honour. Oh, Frank, Frank.

Frank. Not reproaches, Stella. I am utterly crushed. This marriage, or my father's sin and shame revealed to the world. Hush! (*whispers*) trusts betrayed—fraud, felony—a breath of suspicion cast on the bank, and all is destroyed. I was a brave man once. I could have met shame face to face with defiance, but all manhood has left me now.

Stella (*with sympathy*). Frank, poor Frank—dear cousin Frank—

Frank. That secret—that awful secret—swear to me—that secret. I have saved you, thank God for that.

Stella. I do swear, I will never betray it. Bless you, Frank, for this confidence. (*Looks round*) Here comes Talbot for my answer, and Muriel. Oh, Heaven! give me strength—give me strength!

(*Muriel enters, followed by Talbot.*)

Muriel (*beckoning*). Frank. Here Frank.

Frank (*going to Muriel*). Yes, dearest.

Muriel. Here, come away—leave them, don't you see—he has made her an offer. Has she told you?

Frank. Yes.

Muriel. Of course she will accept him. Won't it be sweet, Frank dear? Poor Talbot, he trembles like an

aspen—we'll give them time to settle it, and then we'll come back—just a short turn in the lime avenue. Oh, Frank, I am so happy (*Muriel leads off Frank*).

Talbot (*approaches Stella*). Stella — Miss Grierson, have I your uncle's consent?

Stella. I have not seen my uncle, Captain Cheverley. I have been thinking of what you said.

Talbot. Yes—

Stella. Of the offer you did me the honour to make—

Talbot. Honour! don't speak in that cold way.

Stella. The honour—to make. I deeply appreciate the feeling you have—the preference you have expressed for me—but—

Talbot. But you love me. Oh, Stella, you love me!

Stella. No, Captain Cheverley, not love. I esteem you, very much, as a friend, you know—but not love—not love. I can never love you (*bursts into tears*). Never! Never!

Talbot. But, Stella, why not? Why, as far as manner went, you have accepted me, you have indeed.

Stella. You must not judge from manner. I am very sorry if my manner has deceived you.

Talbot. I am not a bad fellow, Frank will tell you that. You would make me a better man—I would give you the devotion of a life. I'm not a fellow to talk much, I can't use fine words—

Stella. Let this cease, please; I am very sorry to have given you pain.

Talbot. But why, why? Give me a reason, for mercy's sake. Do you love another?

Stella (*starts*). Another? (*After a pause*) I do love another.

Talbot. This man? Does he love you?

Stella. Yes, yes, I cannot tell you any more. Indeed,

I cannot. I must leave you. Let us be friends, friends, you know—always friends (*she hurries off crying*).

(*Frank and Muriel enter.*)

Muriel (*going up to Talbot*). Talbot, dear, where's Stella?

Talbot. Gone! Refused!

Muriel. Impossible!

Talbot. Refused, I say.

Muriel (*to Frank*). Talbot says Stella has refused him.

Frank (*with assumed surprise*). Refused him!

Muriel (*to Talbot*). You've muddled it somehow—that's the reason!

Talbot. Some other man, she says.

Muriel (*to Frank*). Frank, what other man?

Frank. I don't know!

Muriel. It's all nonsense about some other man. I am sure Stella really loves Talbot. I shall talk to her, Frank will talk to her—won't you, Frank? (*To Talbot*) Leave us—don't run away though—where we can get hold of you.

Talbot. I have some pride, Muriel.

Muriel. Pride? fiddlesticks! Be off with your pride, and come back when I call you.

Talbot (*clasping Muriel's hand*). Set it right, Muriel, I *do* love her. I'm a fool to talk about pride—I *do* love her. (*Exit.*)

Muriel. Who can this man be?

Frank. Really, Muriel!

Muriel. It must be known to some of the family. (*Stella passes at back of stage, trying to avoid observation.*) There she is, trying to escape; but she shan't. (*Muriel runs up to Stella.*) Caught, Stella, caught!

Stella. Muriel, dear, let me go. I have refused your brother; I know you won't forgive me.

Muriel. I shall forgive you as soon as you accept him. Talbot says you love some one else; I tell you there is no better man living than Talbot; is there, Frank?

Frank. Certainly not.

Muriel. The best and dearest boy in the world, a little brusque on the surface, but as gentle and tender as a woman. I'm his sister, I mustn't say all I feel and know; you are his friend, Frank, you can speak; you tell Stella what a dear, good fellow my brother is. Speak, Frank, speak.

Frank. Yes, Stella, Captain Cheverley is as good a fellow as ever breathed.

Muriel. Tell her he would make a good, true, noble husband. Tell her, Frank—

Frank. Indeed, Stella, he is all that Muriel says—all.

Muriel. Say she ought to marry him for her own happiness. Speak out; you're not speaking from the heart, I'm sure you're not.

Frank. You are refusing a good, true man, Stella; I assure you, you would be very happy if you married Talbot. (*Aside.*) Oh my God!

Stella. Frank, Frank, I can bear this no longer; not from your lips—your lips.

Muriel. His lips! not from his lips? (*A pause.*) Then Frank is the man you love?

Stella. No, Muriel; on my honour, no.

Frank. Muriel—

Muriel. Your words of hesitation convict you. I have quick eyes, quick apprehension. My father, Talbot; you were induced by them to make me an offer.

Frank. Are you mad, Muriel?

Muriel. No, very sane. You really loved your cousin; she loved you; and now that you are about to

lose her, the force of your love, of her love, can be restrained no longer.

Stella (*with fervour*). Before Heaven, I swear to you that I do not love my cousin, beyond the love I rightly bear him.

Muriel. But, Frank; you and he were together before you refused Talbot; you had told Frank of the offer, and then you said "no."

Stella. Frank, speak out; for Heaven's sake speak out! Clear me, clear yourself, from this awful accusation.

Frank. Muriel, can you think? Can you? (*Breaks down.*)

(*Talbot enters.*)

Muriel (*turns from Frank and Stella, and goes up to Talbot.*) Yes, Talbot, it is quite true; Stella does love another man.

Talbot (*to Muriel*). Do you know his name?

Muriel. No, I cannot tell you his name; I don't know his name—(*clutches Talbot's arm*) I don't know his name! (*They turn away.*)

Stella (*to Frank*). Oh, the shame—this fearful charge of disloyalty, treachery; and then Talbot's contempt; the contempt and scorn of the man I love!

Frank. Poor Stella! poor Stella! Heaven help her. Muriel! Heaven help us all! (*They turn away.*)

(*Enter Lady Marian, Sir Francis, and Grierson, who shows a jewel-case.*)

Lady M. (*to Sir Francis*). Sweet, Sir Francis, perfectly sweet. These millionaires, like our good host, know how to make a splendid use of their wealth.

Sir Francis. Too handsome, by half; too handsome, I say.

Grierson. Procured in a hurry—country jeweller. Not what I intended, not what I mean; I must go to

London for that. (*Presents case to Muriel.*) My dear Muriel, do me the favour to accept this small gift at my hands.

Sir Francis. Small, egad!

Grierson. A mere bagatelle, Sir Francis, a mere bagatelle!

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

NEXT DAY—WITH MEN AND WOMEN'S HEARTS.

Morning room in Grierson's house.

Lady M. and Ireton discovered; Lady M. working South-Kensington needlework. Ireton with his hat on his knees.

Lady M. This is most unexpected, Mr. Ireton.

Ireton. It is, my lady. If any man had told me, I should have laughed in his face.

Lady M. Many people will laugh in your face, Mr. Ireton. Only yesterday morning we were complete strangers.

Ireton. We were.

Lady M. And to-day, you, Mr. Ireton, of Molton Mills—

Ireton. Offer you my hand and fortune.

Lady M. You are not a young and impulsive man; how do you account for this sudden outburst of feeling?

Ireton. Political economy!

Lady M. Political economy and love!

Ireton. Political economy is the central feeling of my heart; touch that, and you touch every chord of my being. The poetry of my life is the practical, the concrete. You are practical—

Lady M. And concrete.

Ireton. I found you as a lamb straying from the true fold of economic doctrine; I began to teach you the truth. You were very grateful; your gratitude won my heart.

Lady M. But your friends would never forgive you—your glorious race after freedom.

Ireton. I'm tired of running.

Lady M. You have been *over*running, perhaps. No, no, Mr. Ireton, this offer is impossible.

Ireton. Queen of Molton Mills!

Lady M. Queen of a republic?

Ireton. That's not a republic; that's my kingdom.

Lady M. My family would never consent.

Ireton. Houses here, there, everywhere—carriages, dresses, diamonds; can family pride give you all that? Your nephew working for his own bread—

Lady M. Poor Felix!

Ireton. He shall work no longer. My son—the Honourable Felix De Beauvoir, my adopted son.

Lady M. Felix has a special destiny—I know he has —land agency.

Ireton. He shall be my agent. I'll re-open negociation with Sir Francis—foxes, I'll give in to foxes; real hedges; no wire fences; game, lots of game. The burning principles of a life—

Lady M. Burnt out for my sake! But no, impossible.

(*Enter Servant.*)

Servant (*to Ireton*). If you please, sir, Mr. Grierson is ready to see you in his study. (*Exit Servant.*)

Ireton. I have brought the ultimatum from the Liberal hundred for Grierson's acceptance. But that land; I'll buy the land. Remember, my lady, a latent Communist, but saved by me—by political economy and by *me!* (*Exit.*)

Lady M. What a wonderful method of salvation! Seriously, I am the daughter of a great family; but fathers die, and brothers, and nephews reign in their stead, and the daughter becomes a stranger in her father's house. Queen of Molton Mills—wealth, after years of penury and dependence; and poor Felix saved from a life of toil—a real gentleman at last! But no, I must be firm. From the fourteenth century to the present hour, we have never made a *mésalliance;* is it for me to be false to the family tradition? No; for ever, no!

(*Enter Felix, with two MSS. under his arm, and a letter in his hand.*)

Felix. It's all up, by Jove! This letter—Rianzares and Company, Limited, have dismissed me from their agency.

Lady M. Felix, dear, impossible!

Felix. Too true. I'm driven to the pen at last.

Lady M. The what?

Felix. The pen, by Jove! (*Lays two MSS. before Lady Marian.*)

Lady M. And this scrawl?

Felix. A novel!

Lady M. And this? Good heavens!

Felix. A play!

Lady M. And you have positively written these things?

Felix. I have.

Lady M. From the fourteenth century—has it come to this?

Felix. But literary men, don't you know. Everywhere—dining out, by Jove!

Lady M. I've seen them—in our set, but not of it. Oh, Felix, you will dine out; when you open your mouth, people will laugh at your humour, and your wit, and your

brilliant repartees: and I shall sit by, and see it, hear it, with an aching heart.

Felix. But intellect. Egad!

Lady M. At one time *we* kept domestic fools, and laughed when *we* chose; but in *our* family we have never demeaned ourselves by trying to amuse other people—by saying clever things, or witty things, or brilliant things—never!

Felix. If I can't be an author, what's left?

Lady M. Your aunt's devotion. I can save you, but—I can make you rich, save you from the melancholy necessity of earning your own bread, from ignoble labour—but—yes, Felix, with one word—one word—

Felix. The deuce!

Lady M. Mr. Ireton has made me an offer.

Felix. By Jove! I'll kick him. An offer, egad! Confound his impudence!

Lady M. An offer. Molton Mills; wealth, wealth!

Felix. But blood! Oh, aunt, I *will* be an author, by Jove! They shall laugh at my wit, at my humour, at my brilliant repartees; feed me, if they will—better a bad dinner than a *mésalliance.* You shall not make this sacrifice for my sake.

Lady M. Dear, good, generous Felix.

Felix. Yes, aunt, an author—plays, dramas, farces, burlesques!

Lady M. No, Felix, a sacrifice must be made. I will make it, if it must be. Mr. Ireton's hand and fortune! But an author, no! (*Ireton enters, Lady M. hurries towards him.*) Oh, Mr. Ireton, my nephew; he desires to be an author. Save him—novels, plays!

Ireton. Good heavens! Be serious, young man. A false step on the threshold of life: works of fiction, which lead to penury; works of fact, which lead to wealth. Look at me. Suppose I had been an author; suppose

I had spent my youth in trifling with works of the imagination, poetry, fiction; do you suppose I should be what I am now?—Molton Mills, rich, honoured, respected, patron of the arts. Not a single ounce of imagination in my whole body, not a single idea in my head to divert me from the real, practical work of life—own business, own interests, own town, own parish, own vestry. A banker's book, young man, the poetry of a big balance is the only poetry that pays. (*To Lady M.*) Grierson will push matters forward with Sir Francis; and then your nephew—

Lady M. You are too kind, Mr. Ireton; too kind.

Ireton. But you, my lady. That one word.

Lady M. Let me think.

Ireton. Let me talk—Molton Mills, Belgravia. Let me talk.

Lady M. It would be ungracious not to listen.

Ireton (*to Lady M.*) Some quiet spot where we shall be undisturbed — figures, material interests, balances, calculations. Oh, joy!

Lady M. Some shady grove, Mr. Ireton, if you will.

Ireton. Bliss! Floating capital; deposits; solid investments; real happiness. (*They go out.*)

Felix. By Jove! (*Lights cigarette.*) If it must be, it must be. I'm better fitted for a man of fashion than anything else; come cheaper in the end, just a handsome allowance. But no trade risks; no broken banks, except at Monte Carlo. (*Takes up MSS.*) Literature, egad! A gentleman at large! a gentleman at large! (*Exit.*)

(*Stella and Frank enter in conversation.*)

Frank. You see, they put off the inspection, so I caught the first train. Have you seen Muriel?

Stella. Not since yesterday. Not from the time she left with Talbot.

Frank. Any letter?

Stella. No.

Frank. Poor girl. This is too terrible. What an awful night I've passed. And you, Stella, poor cousin! Poor Talbot!

Stella. Thank heaven, you saved me from accepting his offer. I am not entangled in the fearful net which binds you. Oh, Frank, I do feel for you in this terrible hour of doubt and anguish.

Frank. I'm not a coward, at least, men have never called me so; but now, with this horrible fatality, forced on relentlessly to shame, to deceive her, to marry her—the veriest craven has more bravery than I possess. (*He looks at her*) And you so calm; a woman, and so calm and brave!

Stella. We can suffer pain better than men, and, being weaker than men, perhaps we are more ready to seek that *other* strength. I can't guide you through this entanglement. Only be patient, brave, and faithful, and you *will* be guided; be sure of that.

Frank. Thank you, Stella; thank you for those words. (*Pause.*) That ten thousand pounds, Muriel's fortune, weighs fearfully on my mind. I tried to prevent my father from accepting it; but he is forced to play out this devilish game to the end.

Stella. Can't you induce him to return the money?

Frank. All in vain, he catches at every straw to stave off the fatal day. He says there may be a turn in time; foreign speculation it seems, some syndicate in Paris; he won't say more.

Stella (*with vehemence*). He must, he shall. Sir Francis will lose it. Oh, Frank! and we stand here with full knowledge of this shameful wrong. When Talbot finds that I knew it, that I did nothing—I can't endure the

thought of that. If your father won't listen to you, he shall listen to me.

Frank. As well talk to granite. I tell you, I have talked, begged, prayed, threatened—hard bitter words, Heaven help me—but all in vain, he will not return that money.

Stella. What's to be done? Something *must* be done! Something *shall* be done! I will do anything—endure anything.

Frank. Anything? To the bitter end? Think before you speak.

Stella. Anything, so that that money be returned.

Frank. It shall be returned.

Stella. Forthwith?

Frank. Forthwith!

Stella. But if your father?—

Frank. My father will be compelled to pay it to save his credit.

Stella. What do you mean?

Frank. I shall break off my engagement!

Stella. But the fearful truth will be revealed. Your father—

Frank. No, not that reason. Another reason.

Stella. What reason?

Frank. The reason of a falsehood. I shall accept that poor girl's hasty imputation. I shall admit that I *do* love you.

Stella. Frank! for Heaven's sake!

Frank. It will break off the match. Reason enough for that.

Stella. But treachery, disloyalty, shame—

Frank. I shall endure all that.

Stella. But for me—she has clung to me, worshipped me, if ever a girl was worshipped—what can I say?

Frank. Be silent.

Stella. What will he think? What will Talbot think of me, of my disgrace to womanhood? Have mercy, Frank, have mercy. Not this fearful way.

Frank. Tell me some other way.

Stella. It will kill Muriel.

Frank. Sooner or later the blow must come.

Stella. But, Talbot, her brother! What will Talbot do?

Frank. I will tell you what I should do if a man acted towards you as I am going to act towards her. I should horsewhip him!

Stella. Horsewhip him?

Frank. Horsewhip that man!

Stella. A soldier—and bear this shame!

Frank. Yes, when that blow is struck, *my* father will be forced, for his credit's sake, to fling back that money to Sir Francis. Could he in face of the world hold that bank account after his own son has been so dishonoured? The money will be saved, but I shall not be the betrayer of my father's crime.

Stella. But you! The scorn of the world, your friends, comrades. The dishonour of the future.

Frank. But my honour, Stella. True to Muriel—not my life, I'm not asked to give that; but my honour, for her sake.

Stella. But she will never know.

Frank. But I shall know. Enough for me to know that in the hour of doubt and temptation I was true to her; that henceforth in my own conscience no thought of her will be dim with shame.

Stella. Frank, dear Frank, come what may, I shall never be ashamed of bearing the name we bear. And I may love him too, as you love her.

(*Servant enters and announces* "Miss Cheverley." *Frank and Stella break away from one another. Frank sinks into a chair, Stella continues standing. Muriel enters,*

in riding-habit, she advances timidly towards Frank, she lays her riding-whip on table with mechanical action. Servant goes out.)

Muriel (*in low tone*). Frank! (*he makes no response, in trepidation and anguish she turns towards Stella*)—Stella! (*she clings to Stella, in low tone*) Forgive me, Stella, those wicked cruel words of yesterday.

Stella. With all my heart, Muriel. (*Aside*) Poor Muriel, alas, alas!

Muriel. Bless you. But Frank. Stella, take me to him. Ask him to forgive me, Stella, dear; make it right between us. Help me, help me!

Stella (*in painful tones*). Frank, Muriel is here.

Muriel (*flying to Frank*). Your Muriel, who loves you so dearly that the thought of losing you, the thought of your not loving her, drove her half mad with wicked, foolish jealousy; your Muriel, who begs, and prays, and kneels for love and forgiveness! (*kneels at his side*).

Frank (*aside*). To cast her from me now. Oh, Heaven! give me strength—strength.

Muriel. Oh, Frank, dear—for support in her weakness, for the mercy of a wiser head than hers, for the love of a true heart.

Frank (*in tones of agony*). Muriel, I am forced to speak hard, cruel words. I scarcely know how to say what I must say; but the fact is—I say, the fact is, I am obliged to admit that I was induced—*induced* to make you an offer. (*Muriel starts to her feet.*)

Muriel. Induced!

Frank. Induced, you said so yesterday.

Muriel. I said so, but I never thought so. Heaven help me! I never thought so.

Frank. Well, I *was* induced, in a thoughtless moment—

Muriel. A thoughtless moment!

Frank. Painful as it is, I cannot any longer withhold the truth. Your suspicions were well founded. I do love my cousin Stella.

Muriel. Love Stella! You say, you love Stella. Again, again, I can't believe it.

Frank. I love Stella!

Muriel. Merciful Heaven! But Stella (*turns to Stella*), Stella, tell me this isn't true—tell me. Oh, this is some cruel punishment for my wickedness yesterday; but I can't bear it—indeed, I can't. Stella, spare me, spare me! Mercy, mercy! One word, one word! (*she clings for a few moments to Stella, but meeting with no response, she leaves Stella and stands half dazed.*) And yesterday I clung to her, and she gave me love and comfort, and it was a lie. Oh, miserable, dreary world! Henceforth, no light of faith, no truth, no confidence; only lies. My dream of love, and honour, and chivalry, a lie; only meanness, and treachery, and deceit left behind. I am not angry. I am too sad to be angry, too sorrowful in the thought that the fairest promise which ever filled a girl's heart has ended in falsehood and shame; too sorrowful to think that such things can be in God's world. Farewell. (*She turns to leave the room; Talbot meets her at the threshold, she flies into his arms.*) Talbot, dear Talbot! (*she bursts into hysterical tears*) Take me away, Talbot—take me away.

Talbot. Take you away. What do you mean, Muriel?

Muriel. Take me away—away from this house.

Talbot. From Frank, your affianced husband?

Muriel. From this house.

Talbot. From him? (*To Frank*) Frank, what does this mean?

Muriel (*eagerly*). I will tell you presently everything, but not now—not now. When we get home—home

(*He leaves her, and approaches Frank. Muriel struggles to sofa.*)

Talbot. Frank, once more, what does this mean? (*Silence*) Can't you speak?

Frank (*in tremulous voice*). It means that our engagement is broken.

Talbot. Man alive! what do you say?

Frank. Broken!

Talbot. Why, why? The reason! the reason! Out with it, man! By Heaven! my patience—

Frank. I love another.

Talbot. Scoundrel! Mean, pitiful scoundrel! Your cousin?

Frank. My cousin.

Talbot. Oh, Frank, Frank, no, no, impossible. And I loved you next to kith and kin. Better! better! And I thought my sister too good for any other man; but I was proud for her to marry you; and now—what do you say?—you say you love your cousin?

Frank. My cousin.

Talbot. Oh, Heaven! and I loved this girl; and she— Oh, Miss Grierson, is this a woman's work, to steal away a man's heart? But he—how awfully have I been deceived. They were right: not a gentleman by birth, they said, varnish it as you may. Pitiful, mean, trade habits at the core. But I said no, a gentleman by nature, and my father said so too, and we were miserably wrong.

Stella (*with sudden impulse*). No, Captain Cheverley, it is false—false, I say. Frank is a gentleman—a true gentleman.

Frank (*in tone of deprecation*). Stella!

Talbot. And you, madam, honourable enough conduct for you, I doubt not; worthy of your hand and heart.

Frank. Leave her alone; no words with her; the fault is mine.

Muriel (*comes up to Talbot*). Come away, Talbot, come away; it will kill me if you stay; indeed, you have no right to interfere.

Talbot. No right!

Muriel. This is my affair, not yours.

Talbot. Our affair, Muriel—*our* honour.

Muriel. Talbot, if you love me—

Talbot. Well, well, we'll go. Oh, by Heavens, Grierson, this sister of mine, and she loved you so deeply—loved *you*, you mean, lying dog! And this cousin, who has won your false heart, let her take you with shame upon your face—shame before the world, hounded from your regiment, driven from society. (*Goes suddenly back to table. In a frenzy of rage seizes Muriel's riding-whip and advances towards Frank.*)

Muriel (*tries to arrest his movement*). You shall not. (*Talbot waves her from him, and goes up to Frank.*)

Talbot. Branded as a coward! (*He raises his hand to strike. Stella rushes between Talbot and Frank and receives the blow of the whip.*)

Talbot (*in dismay*). Madam! (*He drops the whip.*)

Frank (*makes a movement as if to rush on Talbot*). A woman!

Stella (*holds Frank back, retaining her position between the two men*). On me, not on him; he has not been struck; thank God, he has not been struck. Only a woman, a woman can bear a blow, not a man (*in passionate anguish to Talbot, and wringing her hands*). Oh, Captain Cheverley—Captain Cheverley, if you only knew, if you only knew. (*Bursts into tears.*)

Frank. Silence, Stella, silence!

Talbot (*to Stella*). Madam, I apologise for that blow,

fully, amply, humbly, as a man ought to apologise who has even unwittingly struck a woman.

(*Stella bows her head in reply. Grierson enters and hurries up to Frank, grasping his hand.*)

Grierson (*aside to Frank*). Safety, safety; convention signed. Read this: secretary of the Crédit Mobilier—France, England, the Khedive—a rich man—richer than ever.

Frank (*bitterly*). Too late, too late!

Grierson. Too late? (*Looks around*). What's happened? What does this mean?

Talbot. That your son has behaved like a scoundrel—broken his engagement.

Grierson. Frank!

Talbot. I should have struck him, horsewhipped him, but the blow was meant for him—

Grierson. A blow! a blow!

Talbot. I shall proclaim his conduct to the world, broadcast in society; this gentleman who won a girl's love, and broke his plighted faith, and added insult to the grievous wrong by declaring his love for another. Come, Muriel, I cannot bear to stand under this roof.

Grierson. Stop, sir. Now listen to me: there has been a grievous wrong, but on my head, not on his; he is innocent.

Talbot (*with sarcasm*). Innocent!

Grierson. I am *now* a very rich man; but five minutes ago I stood on the brink of bankruptcy.

Talbot. And he knew it!

Grierson. Knew it, after he was engaged to your sister.

Talbot. Then as a man of honour; nay, as a man of commonest feeling—

Grierson. As my son, his lips were sealed. A word, a suspicion, would have been fatal to me.

Talbot. That ten thousand pounds paid into your hands yesterday, he knew it, and yet— Come, Muriel, let us leave this abode of falsehood and deceit.

Grierson. No, for mercy's sake; I will tell everything if need be, all my shame, my crime; his silence stood between me and—and—

Frank. No, father, not that—not that awful word.

Grierson. Yes, to the last word, the last fearful word, they shall acquit you, be the cost what it may. I, Andrew Grierson—

Muriel (*darting forward and laying her hand on Grierson's lips*). Silence! you shall tell no more; I see it—understand it all.

Talbot. Understand what?

Muriel. Frank was true to us, but he was true to his father also. He knew after our engagement was broken off that my father would have immediately withdrawn his account; the money would have been saved to us. (*Flies to Frank.*) Darling Frank, let it be bankruptcy, ruin, shame, I care not; it shall be loyalty, love, and honour. (*Clings to Frank.*)

Talbot. This is madness.

Muriel. Madness! To find that the faith of my life is true?

Frank (*to Talbot*). Take your sister away; for mercy's sake, take her away.

Muriel. No one shall take me away. This is my husband.

Frank. Talbot, I say, our family is plunged in disgrace and dishonour.

Grierson. No, Frank, my disgrace, not yours; my dishonour, I say, not yours. (*To Talbot*) On my head, this shame, not on his, not on his. Frank is true, and noble, and honourable. My shame, my shame!

Frank. Our shame—

Grierson. Only in this room, not before the world; before the world—wealth, honour; only in this room—

Frank. This room is my world—those I love best, those whose esteem and respect I prize more than all else; their scorn, their contempt. (*He goes up, followed by Muriel; Talbot and Stella go up a few paces.*)

Grierson (*shrinks apart*). Those I love best, their scorn, their contempt—saved from bankruptcy and shame, from the felon's dock—rich, respected by the world; but the son I love so well—at his hands the punishment for my crime—isolated from those I love, their love towards me, a scant charity veiling their contempt—an outcast in my own home—alone, henceforth alone. (*About to leave the room.*)

Muriel comes down to him, and stops his exit; she clasps his hands.

Muriel. When I am Frank's wife, I shall be your daughter.

Grierson. But my crime—

Muriel. My love is greater. You will be my father; remember that.

Grierson (*with deep emotion*). Bless you, Muriel! bless you! (*Exit*)

Muriel (*to Talbot*). Ask his pardon, Talbot, ask his pardon for that blow, for those hard words; he is better and nobler than we are; (*turning to Stella*) and Stella—

Frank. I warned her at the very moment she was about to accept your brother's offer.

Muriel. Dear, good Stella, that agony of yesterday and to-day—how those excuses must have wrung your heart! (*To Frank*) Oh, Frank, your misery and sorrow are mine now! (*Frank makes no response.*)

Talbot (*advancing*). Forgive me, Frank, if you can. (*Offers his hand, which Frank grasps.*) Would to Heaven that cursed tongue of mine—

Frank. I do forgive you from the bottom of my heart. But take Muriel from this house; this is no place for her—no place for you.

Talbot. Miss Grierson, Stella, can you forgive me? Can you love me?

Muriel. She does love you, Talbot.

Frank. Stella, remember our position; be firm, I say.

Stella. I'm too weak to be firm, too weak to spurn a true man's love, too weak not to want the support of a true man's heart. I do love you, Talbot.

Talbot (*catches her in his arms, and kisses her*). My darling, mine for evermore.

Stella (*to Talbot*). Talbot!

Talbot. Yes, dearest.

Stella (*whispers*). I'm so glad that blow struck me—only your wife, not your friend.

Talbot. That accursed blow! What reparation can I make?

Stella. You've made it. That kiss (*places her finger on her cheek*), a kiss for a blow—what better gift?

Muriel. And still no kiss for me; oh, cruel Frank!

Frank. Not cruel; Heaven forefend! But when your father knows this story of my father, of *our* shame —he must know it, recollect, every word—he will never let you marry me.

Muriel. He will, he *must*, because I *will;* nothing on this earth can break the sacred bond between us. If the worst had come, have no doubt about it, I should have stood at your side, and defied the world with my faith and love.

Frank. Dear Muriel! (*He kisses her.*)

Muriel. Your father is my father now; I am his daughter. He has deeply erred; he will repent; our love will be his support.

Frank. You good, noble girl!

(*Sir Francis enters, Muriel leaves Frank, and hurries up to him, kissing him.*)

Muriel. Oh, papa, we're all so happy! Stella has accepted Talbot; isn't this good news? Come, Stella. (*Leads Stella to Sir Francis.*) Your new daughter—a hundred times better than your old one.

Sir Francis. Stella, my dear, a father's greeting and a father's love. (*Kisses Stella.*) Talbot, I congratulate you on this happy event; bless you both! (*The lovers group round Sir Francis, and converse.*)

(*Enter Ireton and Lady M., conversing.*)

Ireton. What! your nephew, the Earl? And your brother-in-law, the Viscount? And your uncle, the Marquis?

Lady M. Delighted to welcome you; be assured of that, dear John.

(*Sir Francis withdraws from the lovers, who remain conversing.*)

Lady M. (*to Sir Francis*). Sir Francis, allow me to present to you my future husband.

Sir Francis. Hey, what? The deuce!

Lady M. A father to my poor Felix. (*Felix appears at end of stage in the garden, smoking calmly.*)

Sir Francis. Yes, but the difference in your principles—you a rank Tory, he a rank Radical.

Lady M. Quite so; but among persons who possess property these differences are chiefly verbal.

Voice of Sternhold without. John Ireton! John Ireton! (*Sternhold enters at back.*)

Sternhold. Ultimatum! Does he wobble? (*Comes down.*)

Lady M. (*taking Ireton's arm*). Allow me the pleasure. (*To Sternhold*) My husband-elect.

Sternhold. Never!

Lady M. (*to Ireton*). John, dear John!

Ireton (*with hesitation*). My wife, Lady—

Lady M. Marian, simple Marian to the end of life. (*To Sternhold*) Love is the true republican, Mr. Sternhold.

Sternhold. Pooh, ma'am! Love's a fool. (*To Ireton*) Ultimatum's done it; you would bring it—you were that obstinate, you would. Once, liberal hundreds, glorious platforms, trumpets of freedom; now, corn-land and countesses! Lost, lost! a Tory squire, lost! (*Retires up stage, followed by Ireton.*)

(*Sir Francis and Lady M. converse. Muriel leads Stella forward, leaving Frank and Talbot, who presently follow.*)

Muriel. I say, Stella, it isn't a bit like what you read, is it?

Stella. Not one bit.

Muriel. Better?

Stella. Awfully better.

Frank. Yes, Talbot, it's quite true; women are worlds better than men.

Talbot. Right you are, by Jove!

Stella. Wait till your swans turn out geese. Women are only women, after all—poor, stupid things, nine times out of ten.

Muriel (*with her arms round Stella*). Ah, Stella! a lace veil, a wreath, and a mere girl underneath—that's all!

CURTAIN.

THE END.

ART AND LOVE:

A SKETCH OF ARTIST LIFE.

"Je suis femme, et je suis artiste."

PAULINE VIARDOT.

CHARACTERS.

HARRY.
LUCY.
MR. JACKSON.
SERVANT.

Period, the Present Day.

SCENE.—*A richly-furnished room, opening into garden at end of stage.*

Lucy (*discovered reading novel*). And so they were married. Happiness in all the blessings this earth can afford—happiness in their own true, devoted love—the end! (*Closes book.*) Tableau, the curtain falls—bravo! But what if it rose again?—the gas extinguished, the bare walls of an empty stage, the bright illusion gone. (*Opens book.*) "All the blessings this earth can afford," eating, drinking, carriages, horses, costumes from Paris, social position at home, "happiness in their own true,

devoted love." Ah! me—bare walls of an empty stage, the bright illusion gone! Harry loves me; I wanted to love Harry. I hate being dependent upon Harry; I wanted Harry to be dependent upon me. I wanted to study all *his* whims and fancies, to anticipate every wish; not to have every whim and fancy of mine anticipated, forestalled. I thought he was poor; he turns out to be dreadfully rich, and I must be dependent upon him to the end of my life—peace and plenty for evermore, the supreme happiness of stalled oxen! Dear Harry! He is so kind and good. I do wish I could be quite happy, I wish I could love him with my *whole* heart and soul. But my whole heart and soul can never be his; that first love, that first passion can never die.

(*Enter Harry with letter.*)

Harry. Here's the letter, darling, I couldn't resist coming back. Open it, there's a dear. (*Gives her letter.*) Just look at the coronet, Lucy. (*She opens letter.*) Will they dine with us?

Lucy (*reading*). "Have much honour," etc.

Harry. My father will be so awfully pleased!

Lucy. Why, dear?

Harry. The son of a Marquis, and the daughter of an Earl!

Lucy. Amusing?

Harry. William the Conqueror!

Lucy. Artistic?

Harry. County member.

Lucy. Clever?

Harry. Coal! My father always said, "Harry, my boy, one day they will dine with you. I'm iron—they're coal." And now they're coming to dine, by Jove.

Lucy. I'm very glad!

Harry (*warmly*). Lucy, dear!

Lucy. That your father's happiness is secured.

Harry. But you, Lucy, you! Just think what a lift it is for us; just think of the Jones' and Browns'—won't they be mad, that's all? My father's whole soul has been set upon this. "No, no, my boy," he's said fifty times with tears in his eyes, "not with me, not with me, but with *you*, they shall dine with you, with you." He'll do anything for us now, I know he will; give us a house in Belgravia for the season. Won't that be awfully jolly!"

Lucy. Awfully!

Harry. He'll get me into Parliament. Hang it! purity or not, money's money all the world over. Egad, Lucy, a Member's wife! M.P., open sesame; and the doors of society are flung open. We shall skip up the social ladder together; a husband in Parliament is a woman's opportunity, and a wife's triumph, remember that. Dear old Governor!—he's killing the fatted calf for me. And when I think what a fool I was!

Lucy. No; only a poet.

Harry. That's as bad.

Lucy. I didn't think so when I married you.

Harry. Well, fool or poet, I was mad enough to quarrel with solid pudding, to go about star-gazing, scribbling silly rhymes, and getting into queer company.

Lucy. Where you met me!

Harry. Nonsense! You always catch at every word I say about the past, as if it were a reproach to you. It isn't kind of you, Lucy—it isn't, indeed! I only ask you to *forget* the past.

Lucy. I can't.

Harry. Well, at any rate, not to remind other people about it.

Lucy. I do try to feel ashamed of the past; but I can't quite manage it. Perhaps I shall some day.

Harry. I don't want you to feel ashamed. I only

ask you to be silent—for my sake, for my father's sake, for the sake of the family which has received you so kindly. Isn't that the truth?

Lucy. Yes, Harry.

Harry. Come, let byegones be byegones, in a double sense, dearest; and if I do sometimes reproach myself with having been a prodigal son, with having been a cause of sorrow to my parents, I always remember that I owe the turning-point of my life to your good influence. They know it; and that's why they love you so much. Oh, Lucy, I hope I'm not ungrateful to you! It's my great happiness that I am able to surround you with every luxury that money can procure, to raise your sphere of life—

Lucy. Raise!

Harry. Not raise, exactly, but change—alter the condition of your existence; for instance, you are about to entertain at your own table the son of a Marquis and the daughter of an Earl. Just think of that.

Lucy. I feel it's a great honour.

Harry. And I'm so pleased that I'm able to afford you this honour. I say, Lucy, when you married me you never dreamt of this sort of thing.

Lucy. Never—never!

Harry. I told you I was a fellow without a penny—a beggarly poet.

Lucy. You did.

Harry. It was quite true at the time I spoke.

Lucy. You know I believed it; and I told you, "Never mind money, I am rich enough, by God's blessing, to marry the man I love and respect"; and I married you because I loved you.

Harry. You did; and that's why I can never do too much to repay this noble love of yours. That's why I made it up with my family. That's why I swallowed the

bitter pill of what I then deemed grovelling labour at a desk—sordid money-getting. That's why I've turned at last into a solid, practical man of business—flung away that stupid poetry. And now, to business once more. Ask the Browns.

Lucy. The Browns!

Harry. I've a special motive. And, let me see—(*Consults memorandum-book.*)

Bell and Voice of Crier, without. Oyez! Oyez! God save the Queen! Notice is hereby given that the Grand Company of Star Artists, from London, will perform this evening at the Theatre Royal, Slowford, Lord Lytton's great play of "The Lady of Lyons; or, Love and Pride." God save the Queen!

(*Lucy stops her ears during the Crier's speech.*)

Harry. What's the matter, dear?

Lucy. That man's horrid voice.

Harry. Would you care to go?

Lucy (*going to say* "Yes"). No, thank you.

Harry. "The Lady of Lyons!" Your favourite Pauline. I don't mind going, if—

Lucy. Just think how your family would cry out if I went.

Harry. Well, dearest, if you don't care much about it, perhaps it would be better—

Lucy. I tell you, I would much rather not go.

Harry. We shall be in London shortly, you know.

Lucy. And then we could go secretly, on the sly, without hurting people's prejudices. But I don't want to go to theatres any more. I don't, indeed.

Harry. You're a dear, good girl, Lucy.

Lucy. Because I don't want to go to theatres?

Harry. No. Because you do all you can to accommoda e yourself to the feelings of my family, to reconcile yourself to their stupid, puritanical notions.

Lucy. I don't go, because I am ashamed to go.

Harry. Nonsense.

Lucy. I don't care to be amused by the tricks of people I ought to despise. It's a foolish feeling, no doubt, but I *do* feel it.

Harry. Lucy!

Lucy. I despise stage players! Isn't that enough? I turn away and walk on the other side—what more can I do?

Harry. This is too bad. You exaggerate everything I say, or even hint. Lucy, dear, you ought to have some consideration for me; you ought to recollect that I have something to put up with. And I say honestly that I put up with it gladly, on account of my marriage with you. But the fact is business people, and people of our standing in life—surely you can see my meaning!

Lucy. Yes. That you, a man of business, a man of solid, respectable family, have sacrificed something by marrying an actress.

Harry. Hush! for Heaven's sake!

Lucy. Afraid of the bare walls?

Harry. No, the servants—they mustn't know it.

Lucy. The servants! Oh, Harry, I am *ashamed* at last! (*bursts into tears*).

Harry. Lucy, dearest, I have never regretted for one moment marrying you. I swear it by all that's sacred.

Lucy (*starts up*). You have never regretted marrying me?

Harry. Never, on my honour!

Lucy. Well, then, *I* have regretted marrying you.

Harry. Regretted?

Lucy. Often! Bitterly!

Harry. Lucy, what have I done? Have I ever been unkind?

Lucy. Not intentionally.

Harry. Have I ever denied you any gratification that money can procure?

Lucy. Never!

Harry. Well, then, what's been your sacrifice in marrying me?

Lucy. A bitter one! You have taught me to despise myself. An actress, you have taught me to despise the art which gave me and mine honest bread; the art which raised me to the rank of an artist. Son of a Marquis and daughter of an Earl! *My* patent was God's gift, and you've taught me to despise it! Oh, Harry, there was once a time when you did not despise that gift—that time when you begged my hand as a poet.

Harry. A poet! What did the world say?

Lucy. What did *I* say? My opinion was worth something then. Your "Fidalma" won *my* heart—wasn't that enough?

Harry. They hooted the play.

Lucy. But I had played the part! The failure was mine, not yours. Your part of the work was good enough, and you would have written greater things, and I should have played them better.

Harry. Pshaw!

Lucy. Don't be angry with me, Harry? You've been very good and kind, and I ought to be very happy, only it's not the happiness I dreamt of when I married you. I thought I should still remain an earnest scholar in the art I love, striving for those laurels which I had hoped would make you prouder and prouder of me every day; loving my art more dearly because I loved you so much. And now I can only love you,

Harry. What more?

Lucy. Any woman can love!

Harry. Enough for a woman!

Lucy. But I am an artist as well as a woman, two

natures dwell in me. Oh, Harry! the sea nymph, when she married the king's son, heard the murmur of her sisters' voices, as she lay awake in her husband's arms. I can't forget that great passion, that burning ambition, which filled my soul, which made all other things in this world look small, and mean, and worthless. But I am a woman, and you won my heart. Oh, Harry, I thought you would have understood me better and felt for me a little.

Harry. I do understand you.

Lucy. But you don't feel for me. Before I married you, I was very proud. My art often took me into grand society, the society of those great men who live for ever —noble company! I was only fit to be a hand-maiden in their service, but I thought my art had ennobled me; and now in this society of yours I must learn to be ashamed.

Harry. I do feel with you, Lucy; but, after all, we can't help the prejudices of the world. Try to be practical; you've married a rich man—contrive to be happy in his wealth. Confound it all! if modern upholstery don't quite satisfy the aspirations of the soul, it's better than art starving in a garret. Don't bother about brains; a good dinner is better any day than mental power gnawing hard crusts. Dry herbs? No, a good cook, say I, and hang the expense. Take example by me, Lucy; I've got rid of my rhodomontade ideas; make some slight sacrifice of feeling for the sake of your present position.

Lucy. I have. I have renounced for ever the art I loved as my own life; I have affected to despise and depreciate it before the world, and, lower still, I have turned my back upon past friends—upon that good old friend who had made me what I was.

Harry. That fellow, Jackson?

Lucy. Yes, Mr. Jackson.

Harry. Was a shabby fellow like that fit to meet my friends?

Lucy. No, he was only a scholar.

Harry. Drowned in brandy and water.

Lucy. I've turned my back upon him. He loved me as a daughter! I *am* worthy of my present position!

Harry. That's right, justify everything that was said against you when I wanted to marry you,—that you would never be happy without the glare and excitement of the stage-lights; that you would be for ever looking back on that tinselled rubbish, instead of thinking of the real practical duties of life; that you could never sober down into every-day existence.

Lucy. Oh, Harry, don't be so cruel. I can't bear to hear those words from you; you know it isn't true. I *do* love you as much as a woman can love. I try to do my best, I do indeed. I forgot myself when I spoke like that. Of course Jackson was rather – I feel that perhaps he would have been out of place here. Indeed, I'm sure you acted for the best. Oh, it's so dreadful to hear you say I'm not a good wife; I will forget those days. It's all over now. You said I was to ask the Browns', didn't you?

Harry. Yes, Lucy, dear. (*He kisses her.*)

Lucy. By the bye, Harry.

Harry. Yes.

Lucy. Franks will never be able to manage the dinner. I'm sure we'd better have that man cook from London the Jones' praised so much.

Harry. Capital idea. Franks would be sure to break down.

Lucy. We shall have the new dinner-service too. I'll write a line to Worcester to-day to keep Binns up to the mark.

Harry. Your dinner dress is to be ordered in Paris, mind.

Lucy. The last dress you gave me will do perfectly well.

Harry. You will wear opals and diamonds with the new dress.

Lucy. I don't want any more jewellery, Harry; I don't, indeed.

Harry. Opals and diamonds, worthy of the daughter of an Earl.

Lucy. Never mind about jewels; I only want your love.

Harry. Have both, love and jewels, and be happy. (*Kisses her.*) Turtle of course.

Lucy. Yes, dearest.

Harry. Thick and clear. Remember, Lucy, dear, there's turtle and turtle—important fact!

Lucy. I'll take care, love.

Harry. And, Lucy, you shall make the first rough draft of the *menu.*

Lucy. Really? But I don't know—

Harry. Call it "bill o' fare" when you show it to my father.

Lucy. You dear boy! I will show that I am not the vain, flighty, frivolous *artiste*, but a sober-minded, steady, useful wife—the sort of wife men like you, bent upon rising in society, ought to have.

Harry (*kisses her*). Good-bye. Business is business; your business is the *menu*, a most important affair. This dinner may make or mar us for life. Remember, the son of a Marquis and the daughter of an Earl—and hang the expense! (*Exit.*)

Lucy. Dear boy; how kind he is. I will make him a good wife. I *will* forget all that stupid stuff which filled my brains—poetry and nonsense. He said, "turtle thick and clear." (*Sits at writing table*) I *will* only think of the things a woman ought to think about: turtle; her

husband; her dinner-table; sacred duties of a wife. Oh, those *entrées!* Where's Francatelli? (*Takes book from bookcase, and brings it to table.*) You've married a rich man, Lucy; be happy in his wealth. *Entrées!* I *will* be happy—opals and diamonds; and real diamonds now, not paste. *Vol au vent à la financière*—I suppose that's nice. Poor old Jackson—threadbare coat and battered hat! Harry was right, after all; he would have been quite out of place here. *Suprême de volaille aux truffes!* (*looks at book*).

(*Enter Servant.*)

Servant. If you please, ma'am, a person says he wishes to see the lady of the house.

Lucy. What name?

Servant. No name, ma'am; and he looks shabby.

Lucy. I'm very busy. I can't see him.

Servant. He says he wants to bespeak the lady's patronage for the play to-night.

Lucy. The play? Oh, the Star Company! Poor company! Dim lights, I fear. Well, I'll see him. Ask him in. (*Exit Servant.*) I can take a few tickets; Harry won't mind that.

Jackson's voice without. Say Mr. Jackson, the acting manager of the Royal Star Company, from London.

Lucy (*starts up*). Good heavens! Jackson! How can I ever meet him? (*She goes up stage into garden.*)

Servant enters, followed by Jackson. Mr. Jackson! (*Exit Servant.*)

Jackson (*surveying the room*). Lady of the house not here. Wait, I suppose. Humph! no go, I'll bet. Furniture too fine, drama vulgar; or else opulent dissent, drama profane. (*Sits.*) Comfortable chair, very! Oh, blessed upholsterer! apostle of comfort, saint of luxury, beatifier of men's bodies, how edifying to worship at your shrine! Ah, Jackson, my erring boy, why

didn't you lay out your course of life with a view to sitting at ease? Nay, soft chairs and conventional stiffness; hard benches and freedom! Why not soft chairs and freedom? *laissez aller* and spring couches? Why not? Why must the luxuries of life be limited to starched collars and buckram manners? Insoluble problem! but they *must!* Oh, happy Jackson! there's freedom for you yet; four-and-twenty hours in each blessed day, and every hour your own! Poor slaves of society, without one moment's freedom! poor immortal souls, seated in soft chairs, but trammelled and chained, moulded and chipped, to one set fashion! "Yes, massa, Cæsar and Pompey berry much alike!" *En avant*, Jackson, Philistines be hanged! I'll not cool my heels at their pleasure. (*Rises during this speech. Lucy has remained up stage, irresolute, and trying to summon courage to address Jackson. She comes down.*)

Lucy. How d'ye do, Mr. Jackson?

Jackson (*starts, recognizes Lucy, and bows in formal manner*). Good morning, madam.

Lucy. I'm very glad to see you again, I am indeed. (*Jackson makes no response.*) Don't you know me?

Jackson (*stiffly*). No, madam, I don't.

Lucy. Lucy, your old pupil.

Jackson. I don't know you.

Lucy. Oh, Jackson.

Jackson. I came here on business to sell tickets for the manager, your house with the rest on the road. If I had known that *you* lived here, I should have passed the house, and neglected my business. Good morning, madam.

Lucy. But you'll let me buy the tickets?

Jackson. Business is business. How many?

Lucy. How many are unsold?

Jackson. Ten pounds' worth.

Lucy. I'll take them all!

Jackson. At your service. (*Places tickets on table.*)

Lucy (*takes note from purse*). Here's a note, Mr. Jackson.

Jackson. Thank you. Good day. (*Turns abruptly from her.*)

Lucy. Oh, Jackson, dear Jackson, not one word.

Jackson (*turns to her*). Not one word! Yes, four words: you cut me dead.

Lucy. Oh, no!

Jackson. Dead, I say, before the world.

Lucy. If I did, forgive me.

Jackson. I can't.

Lucy. I sent you money when I heard you wanted it; I did indeed.

Jackson. I sent it back. A pauper, maybe, but not a beggar.

Lucy. I can say nothing, only I'm your Lucy—your daughter, you used to call me.

Jackson, I called you my daughter; I taught you as my daughter; I loved you as my daughter; I *worshipped* you as my daughter.

Lucy Then forgive me as your daughter.

Jackson. You don't know what you ask; for you don't know what you've done.

Lucy. I do know it, and I've been very miserable.

Jackson. Jackson, the old cynic, roughed by the world, maybe he deserved it, maybe softer usage would have dealt saving chastisement, but, anyhow, down hill, with friendship tested by a shabby coat; spurned, but spurning, cynicism for his comfort; and one day a bright-eyed, pale girl, and a widowed mother; he helped girl and mother, and the girl earned her pittance on the boards. This Jackson had seen the great actors of past days; he knew something about the glorious tradi-

tions of the stage; he could see the girl had ambition and brains, and she became his pupil. He cared so much for her, that he cared for the cursed bottle less; her success was intoxication enough for him. And she married. He knew she must marry some day, but he thought he still might be her father, for if not the gift of life, he had given her the gift of knowledge—still she might cling to him, as she had clung before, in the hours of doubt and sorrow. Not so. The one holy love of his life outweighed by a shabby coat, and the last state of that man became worse than the first. That's what you've done, Lucy—that's why I can't forgive.

Lucy. Oh, you *must* forgive! You can't leave me in this miserable state; I'm sure you can't.

Jackson. You should have thought of all this before.

Lucy. But I had to think of my husband—his family. Oh! they've scarcely forgiven him yet for marrying me.

Jackson. Why?

Lucy. Their position.

Jackson. Your's!

Lucy. An actress. What's that?

Jackson. What's art?

Lucy. Nothing to these people.

Jackson. Ah, well; I understand. And so your past life was to be clean wiped out before atonement could be made. I see it now. Ah, my poor lass! maybe I was too hard on you. I know what I am. There is a gulf betwixt the bar-parlour and this room; and yet Jackson was ever at his best with you, a gentleman, Lucy. Answer me.

Lucy. Ever a gentleman.

Jackson. A gentleman, by Heaven! It was your doing. As a mere child, you evoked the manners learnt years past at the old Rectory—a spice, maybe, of the

Grandison school, inherited from the dear old parson. Ah, me! all past and gone—past and gone. Tell me, Lucy, are you really happy?

Lucy. Look around; I've everything—

Jackson (*in tone of protest*). These are not the things to make *you* happy—gewds and gauds of wealth—not the things to satisfy your ambition and your aspirations. Oh, I had dreamt of such a glorious future, upwards, to the high pinnacles of art!

Lucy. I am his wife; I desire nothing else. I am very happy; I am, indeed. (*Cries.*)

Jackson. I pain you, Lucy; forgive me, my child. Fool that I am, I'll not utter another word; we shan't meet again.

Lucy. Oh yes, yes! (*taking his hand, and clinging to him*).

Jackson. Nay, it's all for the best; you must wipe out the past. But I am very glad we have met once more. I've but little store of good remembrances laid up against the one dark day that must quickly come, and I shall be all the happier for thinking of you then as the Lucy of old times—my pupil, my daughter, my good angel. Remember, old Jackson loves you as much as ever. Farewell, Lucy! God bless you!

Lucy. No, no; a few minutes—a little talk about the dear old days. You are tired with this long tramp, I can see you are. I shall have luncheon soon; you *must* stay.

Jackson. Nay, I must be getting forward.

Lucy. I beg and pray; we shall be quite alone—I shan't have any visitors.

Jackson. As you will, my child. I should like for once to break bread in your house. I'll stay and have a chat.

Lucy. That's good. Come and sit down—there.

Old times once more. (*Sit together on sofa.*) We'll have a beefsteak pudding!

Jackson. Bravo! Let's to work.

Lucy. I dare not make it; I can only order it. I'm a slave now, I've so many servants.

Jackson. I've none, so I'm free. Anyhow, don't forget the oysters, Lucy.

Lucy. I won't. It's only my art I'm obliged to forget.

Jackson. Not all forgotten, Lucy. Rosalind is never forgotten.

Lucy. I never look at Shakespeare now; I daren't! A playwriter! He's a badge of my old social degradation.

Jackson. But Rosalind, doublet and hose! you've not forgotten her? You've not forgotten that little scrubby back parlour at Manchester, and those dark, black, smoky December days.

Lucy. Those bright days, when you first introduced me to Rosalind, the sweetest girl I ever met.

Jackson. That little back parlour! What a contrast with this splendid room, hey, Lucy!

Lucy. That little scrubby back parlour?—that temple of magic! For the forest trees grew round me as I read the words of Rosalind; birds sang in the branches, the sheep-bells tinkled, the deer scurried through distant glades, and my ears were full of pleasant, murmuring country sounds; it was a real midsummer outing, though we hadn't too much to eat just then, and coals ran rather short, and Manchester was bitterly cold. This room is handsomely furnished; but upholsterers don't make magic temples, and Rosalind's away in the forest of Arden—far away. Let's order luncheon! (*Goes towards bell, turns.*) "Half and-half?"—that delicious, fizzling "half-and-half:" No, I daren't. I'm afraid you must

put up with old brown sherry. Harry says it's very fine.

Jackson. I'm a philosopher, Lucy, even in things potable.

Lucy. You know it's so nice, we can always imagine what we like. Let's fancy this is the little Manchester back parlour; let's think it's "half-and-half" instead of brown sherry. Come, sit down. (*Jackson sits in easy chair.*) Never mind; we can't help the chair being rather too comfortable for the imagination. (*She sits on stool at his feet.*) I used to light your pipe in the old days, Uncle Jack.

Jackson (*with enthusiasm, producing pipe from pocket*). I have it, the identical old pipe.

Lucy. Oh, let me see it!

Jackson. Bless you, Lucy, you've lighted it a thousand times—bless it!

Lucy. Amen! Only you must imagine the smoking.

Jackson. Lucy, child, have mercy on a man's imagination.

Lucy. Can't, Jackson; Harry would never forgive me. Never mind; it's quite as hard for me as it is for you. I loved the smoke so much, you always talked so finely between the whiffs—a chit of a girl; but how my heart went pit-pat with eager ambition! Those whiffs of smoke used to gather shape, and I saw bright visions of sweet girls, those girls of Shakespeare. They were such intimate friends of yours. Juliet had told you the whole story of her love for Romeo, every word; and Beatrice, and Imogen, and Viola, they had made you their special confidant, telling you everything, every little hope and fear, just as women talk to women. What friends for a woman to know! It half spoilt me for other girls. I'm sorry you can't have your pipe, Uncle Jack. Ah me! *my* dream has gone with those dear old whiffs of

smoke. Come, let me take your hat. (*Tries to take his hat.*)

Jackson. By Sir Charles Grandison, no.

Lucy. I will have it.

Jackson. Give us a spice of your Rosalind. "Come, woo me, woo me, woo me; for now I am in a holiday humour, and like enough to consent. What would you say to me now, an I were your very Rosalind?"

Lucy. "I would kiss before I spoke." (*Tries to kiss him.*)

Jackson. "Nay, you were better speak first."

Lucy. Don't, Jackson; I can't bear to hear the old words. You'll kill me.

Jackson. "Then in my own person I die."

Lucy (*catching at the words*). "No, faith, die by attorney." Be quiet, do.

Jackson. "The poor world," Lucy—

Lucy. "The poor world"—I've forgotten the words.

Jackson. I'll prompt you. "The poor world is almost six thousand years old—"

Lucy (*catching at the words*). "And all this time there was not any man died in his own person, videlicet in a love cause. Troilus had his brains dashed out with a Grecian club; yet he did what he could to die before, and he was one of the patterns of love. Leander, he would have lived many a fair year, though Hero had turned nun, if it had not been for a hot midsummer night; for, good youth, he went but forth to wash him in the Hellespont, and, being taken with the cramp, was drowned, and the foolish chroniclers of that age found it was Hero of Sestos. But these are all lies; men have died from time to time, and worms have eaten them, but not for love, not for love." (*She sinks into a chair.*)

Jackson. Brava, Lucy! I can see the footlights! jets of gas? No—that mystic halo which fringes in the world

of poetry from this work-a-day world, that magic borderland betwixt the real and the ideal, that bright illusion which makes the unreal, truest reality—fiction, the only truth. Ah, me! that power of the ideal which presently crowds the real out of a thousand minds, and bears away heart and soul into the poet's world.

Lucy. Don't talk nonsense, Uncle Jack, you'll drive me mad if you utter another word. Oh, glorious destiny of women! Marry us! cry these men, we are so sweet, so charming; we, masters of the earth, sacrifice everything for our sakes; grovel at our feet, we are such pleasant gods to worship. And our stupid hearts say, yes, we are more than charmed to marry you, to worship you, to grovel at your feet—our destiny, our joy, our triumph! Oh, fools! we women. That pudding will never be made, if it's never ordered! (*goes towards bell, turns*) Never mind, Uncle Jack, if we daren't think, we can eat. Thank Heaven, there's something left to live for. (*Seizes hat.*) Mine at last!

Jackson. What?

Lucy. The hat! the head was mine years ago.

Jackson. And the old man's heart, Lucy.

Lucy. It's mine again now, so I'm very happy; but the old times, we must leave them alone, old friend, they won't bear a thought.

(*Enter Harry in a state of great agitation, holding letters in his hand.*)

Harry. Who's this?

Lucy (*deprecatingly*). Only Mr. Jackson.

Harry. Lucy, what were my orders?

Jackson. I'll not intrude upon you, sir.

Lucy (*still retaining Jackson's hat, to Harry*). Be kind to him for my sake. He only came here by accident to dispose of some tickets.

Harry (*to Lucy*). Then let him go. (*To Jackson*). Good morning, sir.

Jackson. My hat, Mrs. Wilson.

Lucy. He shan't go, he's my friend, my guest. I'm your wife, this is my house, he shall remain!

Jackson. Lucy, dear, let me go.

Lucy. I've asked him to have luncheon with me. He stops, or I go (*through tears*). Oh, Harry, Harry, is this your love, for me?

Harry. Go, or stop, it don't much matter. The old instinct, rats and a sinking ship. (*He turns away, falls into a chair, reads letters intently.*)

Lucy. What's the matter? (*To Jackson*) I'm sure by his manner there's something wrong. I'm sure there is.

Harry. Oh, nothing! Merely the luck of trade—the turn of fortune.

Lucy (*to Jackson*). Leave us for a few minutes, but don't leave the house, I beg and pray. (*Lucy makes Jackson enter the off room.*) Harry, dear, what's happened?

Harry. Nothing, I say—nothing that you'll care about. My father has had a fearful loss—ruined, that's all.

Lucy. Ruined?

Harry. Yes, it's a short word—ruined!

Lucy. Harry, dear! (*She kneels at his feet, clasping his hands.*)

Harry. You'll be happy now; you've married a beggar, after all.

Lucy. Very happy. I've married the man I love.

Harry. I thought I'd done with fancies, fictions. I was clinging to the real, the practical, the solid—*real* things. Eh, presto! and they vanish like a dream. Be practical, my boy—practical. Get rid of your poetry, your stupid, unreal fancies; money's the *real* thing; you

can clutch it, feel it, hold it. (*Sits.*) Poor governor, his dream's over now, his practical castle building has ended in smoke; he might as well have been a flighty poet as a practical man of business; in both cases, balance *nil.*

Lucy. Harry, dear, try to be calm. Is it utter ruin?

Harry. Be assured of that. No diamonds and opals now.

Lucy (*kneeling at his side*). No jewels, only *our* love; that's no dream, Harry, that's real—very real. (*She holds his hand to her heart.*) Isn't it real?

Harry. Forgive me, Lucy; it is real, very real.

Lucy. So it's not utter ruin; we have some wealth left.

Harry. My brave girl, we'll rough it hand in hand. But there's my father and mother; how will they live?

Lucy (*rises*). How will they live? Well, well! by Heaven's blessing. One more *real* thing remains—my art. It's money, Harry. We can't clutch it; but it's money. The things of the brain are real, after all. Oh, it's my turn now—my turn to work for you, as you have worked for me; my turn to work for you all—my dream of married life come true at last. (*With vehement expression*) Oh, Harry, back with me to my old world! We shall be so happy. The old ambitions, the old thoughts, are still mine and yours. The things that money can't buy, the things that make life worth living are not lost by bankruptcy—not part and parcel of a bankrupt's stock. We are rich, not poor; millionaires, not beggars.

Harry. Dear, noble wife, you have saved me from hopeless despair. No, by Heaven, I'm not a ruined man; I'm the owner of a true, brave, woman's heart.

Lucy. Don't be an old stupid! (*Kisses him, and then turns to door, calling*) Mr. Jackson! (*Harry sits on chair; Jackson enters from room*) He's ruined, Uncle Jack, utterly ruined. Forgive him! I'm going on the

stage again. Be very kind to him for *my* sake (*puts her arms round Jackson's neck*). "Still she might cling to him, as she had clung before in the hour of doubt and sorrow." (*Jackson kisses her.*)

Harry. Lucy, dear, write to those people. Get it over.

Lucy. Yes, Harry; at once. (*She goes to writing table. Jackson goes up to Harry, who remains seated.*)

Lucy (*taking up a sheet of note-paper*). "Son of a Marquis, and daughter of an Earl." (*Sits, as if to write.*)

(*Jackson places his hand on Harry's shoulder; Harry rises; Jackson clasps his hand warmly; Harry responds cordially, but neither speak.*)

Enter Servant. Luncheon! (*Exit Servant.*)

Harry. Mr. Jackson, will you take my wife?

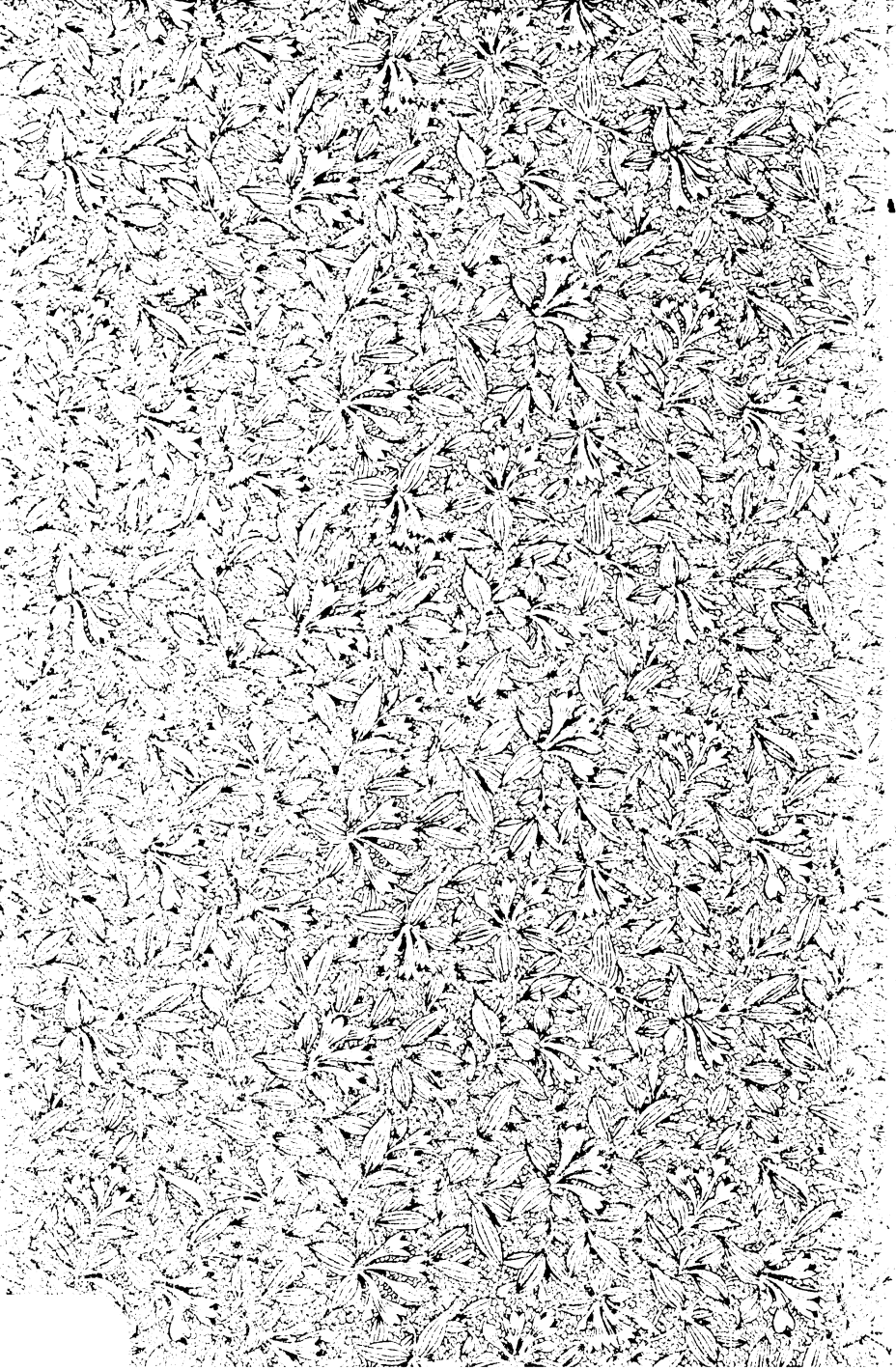
Lucy. Harry! (*She takes Jackson's arm, and then, turning, she holds out her other arm to Harry; he advances towards her.*)

CURTAIN.

THE END.

SIMMONS & BOTTEN, Printers, Shoe Lane, E.C.

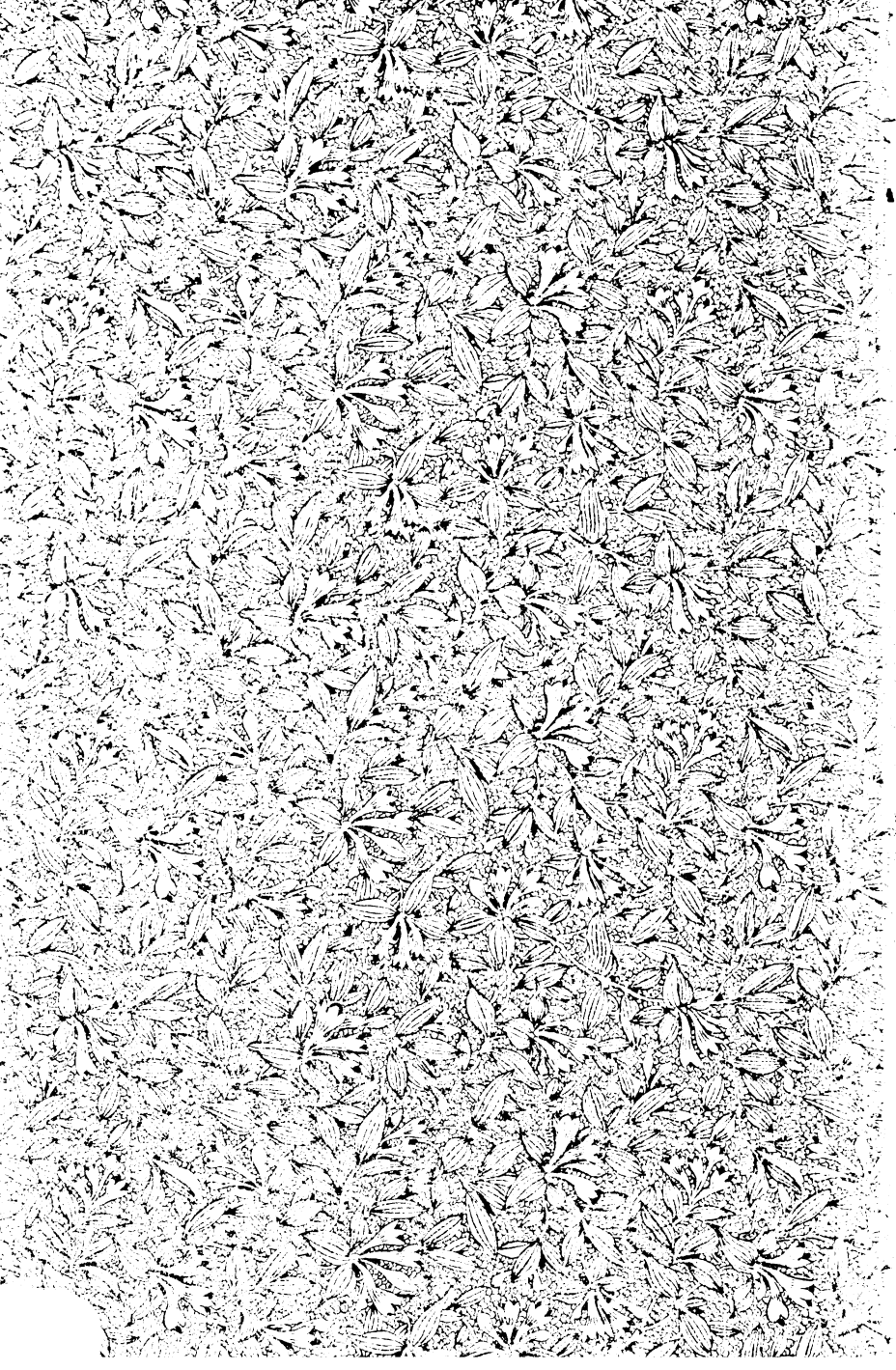
W. & S.



This book should be returned to the Library on or before the last date stamped below.

A fine of five cents a day is incurred by retaining it beyond the specified time.

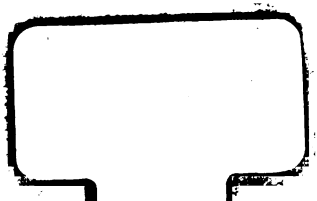
Please return promptly.

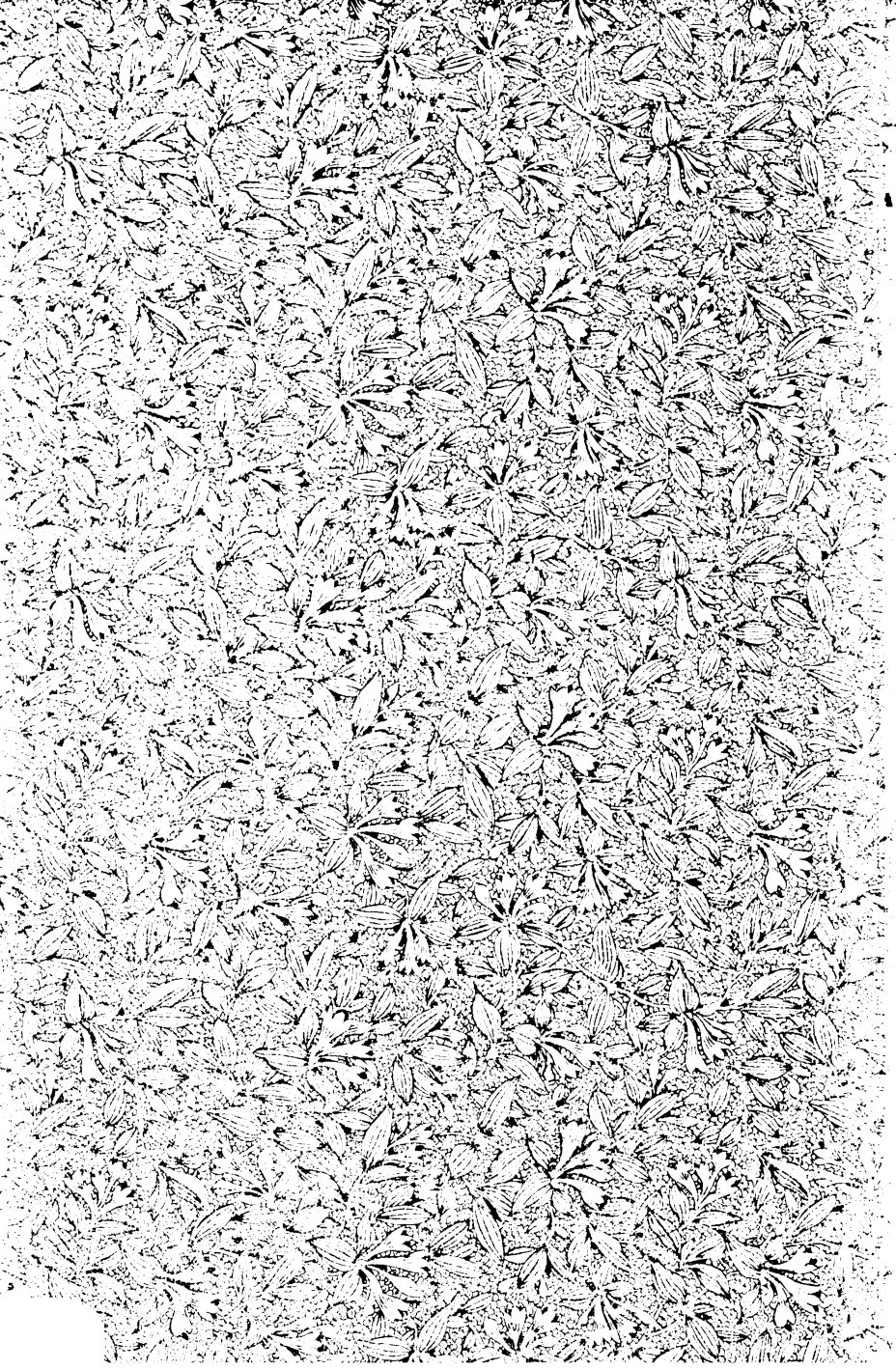


This book should be returned to the Library on or before the last date stamped below.

A fine of five cents a day is incurred by retaining it beyond the specified time.

Please return promptly.

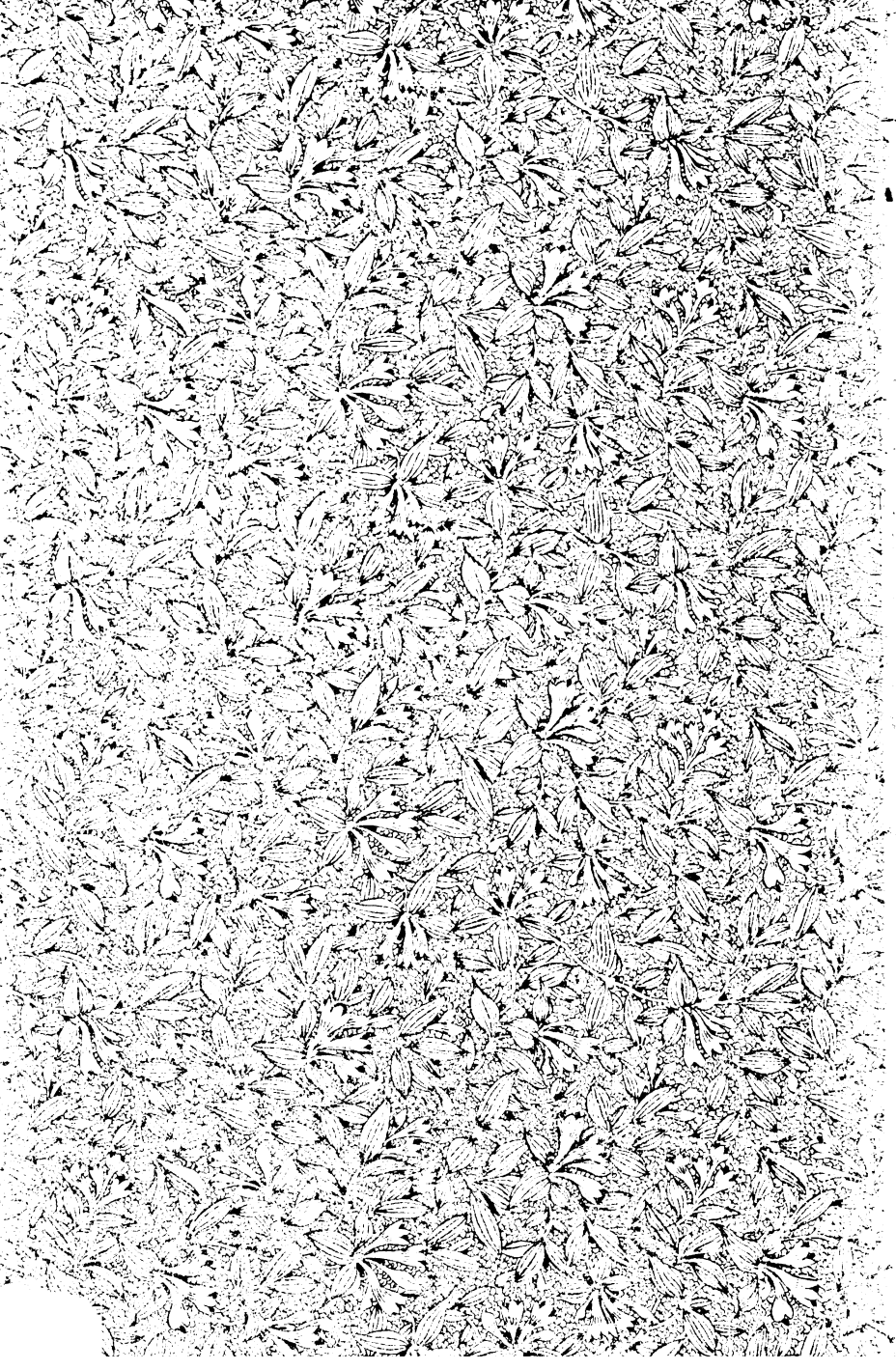


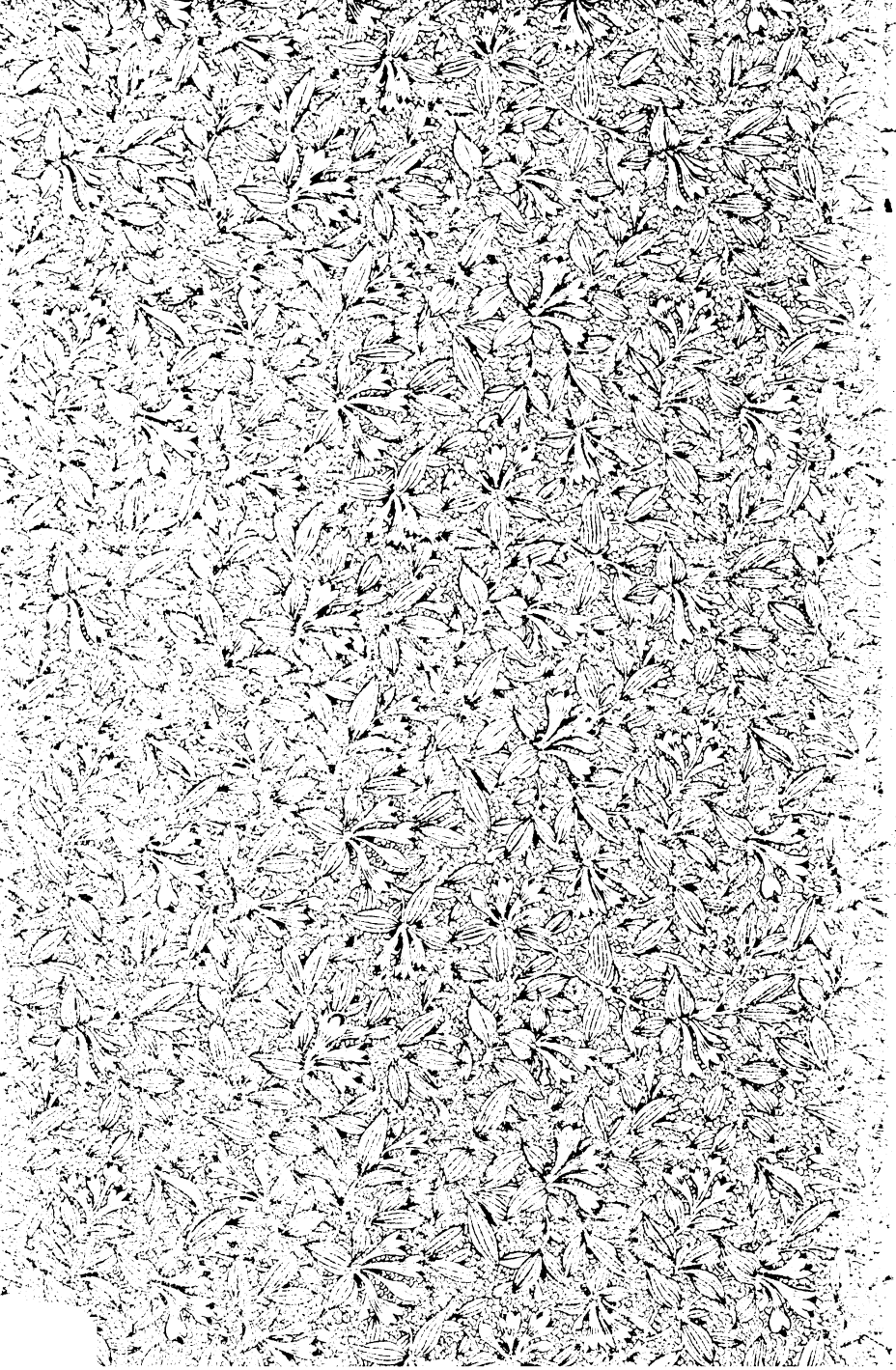


This book should be returned to the Library on or before the last date stamped below.

A fine of five cents a day is incurred by retaining it beyond the specified time.

Please return promptly.





This book should be returned to the Library on or before the last date stamped below.

A fine of five cents a day is incurred by retaining it beyond the specified time.

Please return promptly.

23497.61
Four original plays :
Widener Library
002968812
3 2044 086 860 228